New Perspectives on Advaita Vedānta

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Bradley J. Malkovsky

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New Perspectives on Advaita Vedānta

Essays in Commemoration of Professor Richard De Smet, S.J.

by

Bradley J. Malkovsky

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CONTENTS

Preface vii

The Contributors ix

Introduction: The Life and Work of Richard V. De Smet, S. J. 1
Bradley J. Malkovsky

Śaṅkara and Buddhism 18
Sengaku Mayeda

Śaṃkara's Theological Realism: the Meaning and Usefulness of Gods (*devatā*) in the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtra Bhāṣya* 30
Francis X. Clooney, S. J.

The Self of Being and the Being of Self: Śaṃkara on "That You Are" (*tat tvam asi*) 51
Julius J. Lipner

Śaṃkara on Divine Grace 70
Bradley J. Malkovsky

Śaṃkara in East and West Today 84
Anthony J. Alston

Śaṅkara's Life and Works as a Source for a Hermeneutics of Human Rights 109
Arvind Sharma

Śaṅkara in Contemporary Inter-Religious Dialogue—A Brāhmin's Perspective 122
S. N. Rao

The Contemporary Relevance of the Advaita of Śaṇkarācārya 148
Sara Grant, R. S. C. J.

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A Bibliography of the Publications of Richard V. De Smet, S. J. 165

Index 179

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PREFACE

The articles published in this book were originally intended to honor Professor Richard De Smet, S. J., theologian, indologist, philosopher, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday on April 14, 1996. De Smet was one of the foremost authorities in the twentieth century on the Hindu theologian Śaṃkara (ca. 700 C.E.) and a leading participant in the theological and philosophical encounter between Hinduism and Christianity. Unfortunately circumstances have prevented the appearance of this volume until a considerable time after that milestone had been reached. More tragically, De Smet did not himself live to see the publication of the book that was to offer him accolades, as he passed away in Belgium, his homeland, after a long illness on March 2, 1997. What was therefore to have been a felicitation volume must now become a commemoration work. The contributors to this book are nonetheless pleased that De Smet's life and work can be honored and remembered in this way.

I used three criteria in approaching possible contributors for this volume. First, the prospective scholar must be a friend of De Smet or at least familiar with his work, though De Smet's particular views would not need to be referred to or agreed with in the essay to be submitted. Second, each writer must have Śaṃkara as one of his or her areas of scholarly expertise and be able to work with Śaṃkara's texts in their original Sanskrit. Third, each contributor must write on Śaṃkara and not on any other indological theme unless Śaṃkara were to be included in some substantial way. This would lend itself to a greater overall thematic unity, the lack of which has plagued many a felicitation volume. Moreover, the individual authors were encouraged to approach Śaṃkara as creatively as possible, not simply reproducing what is already well-known about his work. It was thus hoped that this volume would be characterized above all by new avenues to Śaṃkara-Vedānta and by fresh perspectives on Śaṃkara's thought. I believe that the contributors have by and large succeeded in their task.

The reader will notice that the first four essays on Śaṃkara are primarily historical-exegetical while the last four, though making ample use of Śaṃkara's writings, are more ordered to the Advaitin

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thinker's place in the context of contemporary issues and challenges. In the case of two contributors in particular, Sara Grant and S. N. Rao, I specially requested pieces oriented to the place of Śaṃkara in the contemporary lived experience of dialogue between Hindus and Christians.

Special thanks must go to Lindsey Esbensen, Juan Mendoza, David Rylaarsdam and Jeff Truscott, all students at the University of Notre Dame, who at various times admirably provided the necessary technical assistance.

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THE CONTRIBUTORS

Anthony J. ALSTON received his Ph.D. in Banaras in 1964 and is a citizen of the U.K. residing in London. His publications include *Realization of the Absolute* (London: Shanti Sadan, second ed. 1971); *Śaṃkara Source Book*, six vols. (London: Shanti Sadan, 1980–1989); *The Method of the Vedānta* (London: KPI, 1989); *The Thousand Teachings* (London: Shanti Sadan, 1990); *The Heart of Śrī Śaṃkara* (London: Shanti Sadan, 1997).

Francis X. CLOONEY, S.J. is Professor of Comparative Theology at Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. He has researched both Sanskrit and Tamil traditions, and his books include *Thinking Ritually: Rediscovering the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini* (Vienna: Indological Institute of the University of Vienna, 1990); *Theology After Vedānta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); *Seeing Through Texts: Doing Theology Among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); *Hindu Wisdom for All God's Children* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998).

Sara GRANT, R.S.C.J. was born in Scotland and has resided in India since 1956. For many years in Pune she was simultaneouly Professor in the Indian Studies Dept. of Jnana-Deepa-Vidyapeeth and co-*ācārya* of the Christa Prema Seva Ashram. Her books include *Lord of the Dance* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1987); *Descent to the Source* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1987); *Towards an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1991); *Śaṅkarācārya's Concept of Relation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999). She has also published widely in Indian journals, on both theological and indological themes.

Julius J. LIPNER has been lecturing in Indian Religion, especially Hinduism, and the comparative study of religion in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge for many years. He is also at present Director of The Dharam Hinduja Institute of Indic Research in the Centre for Advanced Religious and Theological Studies of that Faculty. Dr. Lipner is of Indian extraction and was born and

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grew up in India, chiefly in Bengal. His special areas of interest include Vedānta, issues of truth and dialogue in religion, and 19th century and early 20th century Bengal. He has published a number of books, including *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 1994), *The Fruits of Our Desiring: An Enquiry into the Ethics of the Bhagavadgita for our Times* (Calgary: Bayeux Arts, 1997) (editor); *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (Bombay: Oxford, 1999).

Bradley J. MALKOVSKY is Assistant Professor of Comparative Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, U.S.A. He has recently published articles in the *Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin*, *The Journal of Religion*, *Horizons*, and *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*.

Sengaku MAYEDA is Professor Emeritus at the University of Tokyo. His special field of interest is Vedānta, especially the Vedānta of Śaṃkara. His books in English include *Śaṅkara's Upadeśasāhasrī: Critically Edited with Introduction and Indices* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1973) and *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṅkara*. Translation with Introduction and Notes and Foreword by John Koller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). He has also published many articles on Śaṃkara and Vedānta.

S. N. RAO has been involved in Hindu-Christian dialogue in India for the last twenty-five years. He helped organize the World Conference of Religions in Kerala in 1971, 1981 and 1991. He has taught Hinduism to Hindu lay groups for forty years and he has for many years been Visiting Professor of Hinduism in Catholic seminaries throughout India. He has also lectured at Catholic colleges and centers of spirituality and conducted courses on Indian Spirituality to Catholic nuns in many novitiate houses. He has published many articles on Hinduism, both popular and technical.

Arvind SHARMA is currently Birks Professor of Comparative Religion in the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University, Montréal, Canada. He is the author of several books and articles. His most recent publications include *Hinduism for our Times* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); *The Concept of Universal Religion in Modern Hindu Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); and *Feminism and World Religions* (Albany: SUNY, 1999), which he co-edited with Katherine K. Young.

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THE LIFE AND WORK OF RICHARD V. DE SMET, S. J.

Bradley J. Malkovsky

Richard De Smet's name has been known for several decades, especially in India, to scholars who have been particularly interested in a systematic and philosophical approach to Hindu-Christian dialogue. Unfortunately, his writings, the great majority of which were published in India, have never been as accessible to a broad western readership as have the works of other European Christian thinkers of his generation who chose India as their new homeland, such seminal figures as Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux, 1910–1973) and Dom Bede Griffiths (1906–1993). Nor is much known in the West about De Smet's life in general. The purpose of this introduction is to present the reader with the basic contours of De Smet's extraordinarily rich life as well as to briefly summarize some of his scholarly achievements as an indologist, philosopher and theologian.

Education

Richard De Smet was born April 14, 1916 at Montignies-Sur-Sambre (Charleroi) in Belgium; his father was from the Flemish-speaking north, while his mother was from the francophone south. Richard's first language was French, but after his mother passed away when Richard was eight, he learned Flemish from his father's family with whom he spent each school vacation.

In view of his future life's work, it may be said that De Smet's first significant milestone was his entry in 1934 into the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Arlon. The Jesuit intellectual and spiritual environment during the school years prior to his acceptance into the order had certainly propelled him in this direction. One important incident proved to be especially telling: as a sixteen-year-old De Smet happened upon an article in French dealing with the mysterious Sanskrit words *brahman* and *ātman*. He found himself keenly interested in these terms but could not fully grasp their meaning. It was not until many months later that one of his esteemed Jesuit teachers, Fr. René Debauche, unlocked their significance in a class introducing

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Hinduism and Buddhism. This small beginning would one day lead De Smet to take up seriously the study of Hindu doctrine and spirituality and to enquire as to the possible significance of Vedāntic thought in particular for Christian theology. But being a product of his time, the young Catholic scholar and future priest would first have to immerse himself in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, whose influence on Catholic systematic thought is comparable to that of Śaṃkara on Hindu metaphysics. De Smet's indebtedness to his Jesuit teacher was enduring; near the end of his life he remarked that the two years he spent as Debauche's young pupil had given him a vision of a Christianity which must be open to all the values of the world.[1]

During his two-year novitiate De Smet continued to immerse himself in Indian thought, giving special attention to the writings of the Belgian Jesuit Pierre Johanns, who provided a Catholic assessment of such prominent classical Vedāntin thinkers as Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and Vallabha. Looking back at this early stage of his intellectual development, De Smet cryptically remarks that it was during this time that he had spiritual experiences that he was only later able to recognize as yogic in nature.[2] The earliest years of his membership in the Society of Jesus also brought De Smet in contact with Joseph Marèchal, S. J. (1878–1944), one of the leading transcendental Thomists of his time. Though Marèchal was not De Smet's teacher in the classroom their many private conversations led De Smet to a deep appreciation of the teachings of Thomas Aquinas and influenced him to adopt Marèchal's transcendental method of combining the modern philosophical "turn to the subject" with the teachings of Aquinas.[3]

After a B.A. in classical philology and one year of military service as a medical orderly De Smet undertook the standard Jesuit philosophical training, reading from Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena, Aquinas and others. One of the things that struck him in his reading was the affinity between the metaphysical

[1] For more on De Smet's relation with Debauche see "Richard V. De Smet, S. J.—An Appreciation by Julius Lipner," *Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin* 11 (1998):51.

[2] De Smet mentions this in an unpublished essay, "The Trajectory of My Dialogical Activity," (p. 2) which I have used extensively for much of the biographical information found in the first part of this article. That De Smet refers to such experiences at all near the end of his life is surprising; they are not alluded to in any of his publications during his fifty years of writing nor does he expound on the possible lasting significance of his early yogic experience for his theological assessment of Hinduism.

[3] De Smet mentioned this to me in a private conversation in 1988.

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approach to reality of these ancient and medieval Western thinkers and that of the Vedāntins he had been studying. However, in 1939, before his philosophical studies could be completed, World War II broke out. De Smet was recalled to the Belgian army, again as a medical assistant, and served through three battles, tending to the wounded and dying during the Nazi invasion of Belgium and France. He and his company were captured in 1940, and De Smet was interred for one year at prisoner-of-war camps in Austria and Germany. In looking back to his months in Stalag XVII B in Austria De Smet was able to regard it as a critical period of growth in his life. The young Jesuit not only tended to the spiritual and psychological needs of many prisoners from European and African lands, but also, through the cooperation of other intellectuals, he was able to organize in camp what he called a "quasi-university," where hundreds of prisoners would gather daily to hear course lectures in history, philosophy, religion, commerce, languages, history of literature and other topics. Even larger crowds would assemble in the evening to hear what were called the "Great Public Lectures." Each day ended in prayer.

De Smet was released from camp in 1941 as a medic and immediately returned to the study of philosophy. During the next two years he read all the works of Henri Bergson and also deepened his knowledge of Aquinas, focusing on Thomas' teaching of the relation between God and the world. His studies culminated in a Licentiate thesis on Bergson's epistemology. A two-year period teaching high school in Verviers and Brussels immediately afterward allowed him sufficient time to continue to read widely, most notably from Dante, Sartre and early Buddhism.

The young seminarian requested to go to India, and after a first term of theological studies in Louvain he arrived in Kurseong in North Bengal in February 1946. Since, on account of the Himalayan winter, the academic year in St. Mary's Theological College began six months later than in Belgium, De Smet found himself with several free months available with which to rededicate himself to a systematic study of the philosophical-religious traditions of Hinduism. A Bengali pandit introduced him to Sanskrit. Thereafter he returned to St. Mary's to complete the four-year training in Catholic theology he had begun in Louvain. These were not the typical theological studies offered by European faculties of the time. Most of De Smet's professors had a solid indological competence to go with their theological learning, and the majority of the courses were oriented

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to the encounter with Indian religions, especially to Hindu doctrines and practices. Here was a Christian theology largely receptive to the truths and values of the other religions of India. In one of his seminars De Smet chose as a research topic the relation of the world to the Absolute according to Śrī Śaṃkārācarya. This would become a key theme in his later work.

At the completion of his theological studies and after ordination to the priesthood De Smet was asked to prepare himself to teach in the soon to be opened department of philosophy at De Nobili College in Poona. And so during the next two years he studied Sanskrit in Calcutta with famous Jesuit indologists such as G. Dandoy,[4] R. Antoine and P. Fallon. He studied Indian logic in Sanskrit and translated for himself commentaries by Śaṃkara and Rāmānuja. Yet he never regarded himself as an expert in Sanskrit.

After these many years of academic training De Smet was given a nine-month opportunity to refresh himself spiritually according to the principles of his order's founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola. While making in complete silence a thirty-day retreat according to Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* De Smet was again struck by certain similarities between Hindu and Christian mystical doctrine, in particular between the teachings of Ignatius and those of Vedānta. Indifference to wealth and poverty, to health and illness except insofar as they can help lead to God reminded him of the Indian *vairāgya* (dispassion) from all *dvandvas* or pairs of opposites. Learning to see the Creator in all things and especially, as Ignatius taught, to recognize God in oneself as the continued source of one's very life, awareness and intelligence recalled to mind the ascent to the *puruṣa* in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and also chapter eighteen of Śaṃkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī*, where the *ācārya* (teacher) declares the lower limited self to be a reflection (*ābhāsa*) of the indwelling supreme Self (*paramātman*).

An event of great importance in De Smet's life took place in 1950 when he attended the silver jubilee session of the All-India Philosophical Congress in Calcutta. The presider, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, delivered an address before a packed hall of university professors in which he presented the doctrine of Śaṃkara as a purely rational philosophy rather than as a theology based on faith in revealed truth. Radhakrishnan's views are representative of a widespread twentieth

[4] Dandoy was the editor of *The Light of the East* which he had founded with P. Johanns.

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century interpretation of Śaṃkara, but it puzzled De Smet when he encountered it for the first time, for he had gained the impression from reading Śaṃkara that the *ācarya's* entire doctrine derived from *śruti*, the Vedic scriptures, which were accepted as an infallible authority of non-human origin. In order to pursue this question further, De Smet chose as the topic for his doctoral dissertation Śaṃkara's method of attaining experiential knowledge of *brahman*. During his two years in Rome at the Gregorian University he returned to the original works of Śaṃkara to acquire as reliable a knowledge of his method and teaching as possible. His conclusion, as presented in his 1953 dissertation, *The Theological Method of Śaṅkara*,[5] was that Śaṃkara was essentially a *śrutivādin* or scriptural-based theologian. He was, in other words, a thinker who, although quite capable of employing reason to argue his views and to destroy opposing ones, ultimately subordinated the power of rational thought to the authority of scriptural testimony. This synthesis of reason and revelation shared much with medieval Christian theology and only little with the European Enlightenment. De Smet's doctoral thesis was never formally published, but roneotyped copies have been disseminated widely among indologists East and West, with the result that many have been persuaded that Śaṃkara's system is indeed to be regarded as a theology founded on revelation rather than as a pure philosophy based on the authority of private experience or on independent reason.

Academic Career

His doctorate completed, De Smet applied for reentry to India, but his visa was refused three times. After a year's wait he was able to begin teaching in Poona in 1954. He spent most of the next four decades as professor of philosophy and Indian studies at De Nobili College and Jnana-Deepa-Vidyapeeth. For the first fourteen years of his tenure he offered traditional Western courses on logic, metaphysics and philosophy of God as well as comparative courses on metaphysics in which he introduced his students to Sāṃkhya, classical Vedānta and modern Hindu thought. Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and K. C. Bhattacharya were studied in conjunction with Augustine, Bonaventure and Aquinas. In 1968 De Smet's petition to develop a

[5] Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1953.

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distinct section of Indian Studies was approved. This freed him from courses that were entirely Western in orientation.

De Smet had close ties with people in many countries, but none more than in India. Deep and lasting friendships with Hindus were forged especially through contact at philosophical and indological societies. He was a life-member of the All-India Philosophical Congress and Indian Philosophical Association. Upon his return to India in 1954 he began presenting papers on Indian and Christian themes before mostly Hindu audiences and established himself quickly as a leader in the philosophical encounter of Hindu and Christian thought. Through active participation at national conferences he became familiar with Indian professors from around the country. At the beginning of his career, as a still relatively unknown young scholar, he would occasionally find himself publically rebuffed by those who were suspicious of a hidden missionary agenda, but more often than not one or another Hindu friend would come to his defense and declare De Smet a fellow-philosopher who should be treated with trust and respect. As he gradually gained the regard of Indian philosophers for his competence in Eastern thought he was increasingly invited by Hindu professors to lecture on both Christian and Vedāntic themes at universities in Varanasi, Nagpur, Ahmadabad, Madras, Delhi and elsewhere. It was one of De Smet's hopes that his presence at inter-philosophical and inter-religious meetings would help reveal to his partners in dialogue a Church with an intellectual face and would work to counter a common Hindu perception of the Church as blindly dogmatic.

Dialogical encounter extended beyond purely academic settings to Hindu and Christian ashrams. De Smet spent time with Vaiṣṇava monks in Vrindavan and travelled to Rishikesh more than once to visit the famous Forest Academy that had been established by Swami Sivananda in the late 1950s.[6] During each visit De Smet would be requested to address the *satsang*, i.e. the spiritual meeting attended by everyone at the close of the day. When invited to speak on Jesus and his teaching De Smet would attempt to explain the Gospel within the rich context of Indian spirituality. One six-week visit[7] to the Forest Academy, in which he was invited to lecture on the history

[6] Swami Sivananda had invited De Smet to visit the Academy in the fifties, but De Smet had been unable to accept until after the Swami's death.

[7] De Smet does not give the year when this took place.

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of Indian spirituality, was particularly noteworthy, as his audience consisted of forty-six Hindus and nine foreigners. At other times he visited Ramakrishna swamis in Calcutta, Belur, Madras, Bangalore, Kaladi and Bombay, and he also frequently found himself in intimate discussion on religious issues with Muslims, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs.

De Smet appears to have had even greater contact with Christian ashrams and monks than with Hindu ascetics. He was a participant in the "Cuttat group" meetings hosted in the early 1960s by J.-A. Cuttat, the Swiss ambassador to India, and organized by Swami Abhishiktananda.[8] The purpose of these pioneer sessions was to bring together members of various Christian churches to discuss the requirements for a true spiritual encounter between Hindus and Christians, one that might draw on personal contemplative experience. The method settled on by the Cuttat group for realizing this goal was the contemplative reading of passages from both the Bible and the Upaniṣads followed by prolonged periods of thoughtful meditation and silence. This method was then carried out in actual dialogue with Hindus whose ultimate purpose was a "truly religious and existential level of convergence on the essentials. It infused inwardness into dialogue."[9] De Smet held Abhishiktananda and his writings in high esteem, and he was grateful that through the Swami he had been able to come to know members of other churches with strong ties to Hindu communities, especially people such as Murray Rogers and John Cole.

The Christian ashram movement in India, which included Benedictine, Trappist, Jesuit and other orders, benefited from De Smet's indological competence. He frequently travelled to the Kurisumala Ashram in Kerala, under the auspices of Fr. Francis Mahieu, to help the monks enter more deeply into the wisdom of the Upaniṣads and the spirituality of the Bhagavad-Gītā, and of other devotional literature. He was a close friend of Sr. Sara Grant, herself a Śaṃkara scholar and fellow-professor of philosophy at the Jnana-Deepa-Vidyapeeth in Poona, and he sometimes gave talks at her Christa Prema

[8] De Smet attended the second meeting, held in Rajpur in 1962, and also the third meeting, which convened in Nagpur a year later. He and others had been excluded from the initial meeting held in Almora in 1961, because of Abhishiktananda's aversion to philosophical theorizing about non-duality. See Swami Abhishiktananda, *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point—within the Cave of the Heart*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1976, revised ed., 94.

[9] De Smet, "Trajectory," p. 16.

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Seva Ashram. He enjoyed staying with Fr. Bede Griffiths at Shantivanam Ashram and with Fr. Ignatius Hirudayam at Aikyalayam, both foundations being situated in Tamil Nadu, and he lectured on Indian spirituality and spiritual history at various other Catholic monasteries and institutes of the south. From 1968–1975 he would also spend a few months each year at the Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay, under the leadership of Frs. Stephen Fuchs, Klaus Klostermaier and L. Godwin, all of the SVD order. De Smet also spoke to Catholic parishes on the riches of Indian spirituality, and he conducted spiritual retreats for Christians of different denominations.

De Smet was elected the first President of the Association of Christian Philosophers of India in 1975, a post he held for many years. Through his writings and his teaching he influenced many Christian scholars of Vedānta worldwide.

Writings

Richard De Smet was a prolific author; hundreds of articles and book reviews have appeared in Hindu and Christian academic journals, Festschrifts and encyclopedias, almost all of them in English.[10] The great majority of his essays were seminar papers written in the context of his dialogical activity in India or were responses to invitations to write on one or another indological or philosophical theme. His writings are thus wide-ranging and at times highly specialized. Only gradually did he begin writing for a Christian readership, and more and more of his articles finally began to appear in Catholic periodicals.

Because of De Smet's heavy course load and his desire to honor a constant flood of requests to write on predetermined themes—a tribute to his authority in inter-religious dialogue—he never found time to edit his dissertation for publication in proper book form.[11] He did manage, however, to write one small volume, *Philosophical Activity in Pakistan*,[12] and he co-edited and contributed to another

[10] As noted above, De Smet's first language was French.

[11] It is expected that the dissertation will soon be published in Washington D.C. by The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.

[12] Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress Series, 1961. De Smet had researched a much larger twin volume, to be called *Philosophical Reflection in Independent India*, but was unable to bring it to publication form.

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work, *Religious Hinduism*.[13] The latter work, which summarizes and appraises the salient teachings of Hinduism from a Christian perspective, was thoroughly revised by De Smet not long before his death. During his final years he was working on an historical project dealing with the encounter of Vedānta and Christian theology since the time of Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656), but his passing away unfortunately prevented him from bringing this study to completion.

Scholarly Contribution

The last half-century of indological research, especially that undertaken by western scholars, has seen the emergence of new interpretations of Śaṃkara's doctrine. The traditional approach to the so-called "Prince of Advaitins" has been to read and interpret him almost exclusively through the lense of the innumerable commentaries and sub-commentaries on his work from within the Advaita tradition. The presupposition of this method has been the supposed doctrinal unity of Śaṃkara and his successors. Whatever differences may be detected between Śaṃkara and post-Śaṃkara Advaita Vedānta are generally explained by Advaitins as refinements or as a logical unfolding of the master's thought by his later disciples in the sense of an organic development that faithfully preserves Śaṃkara's doctrine and intent. This assumption of doctrinal unity, however, has been seriously challenged in the twentieth century, especially by the painstaking research of the German indologist and theologian Paul Hacker (1913–1979). Hacker noted a number of quite central inconsistencies between Śaṃkara's doctrine, as revealed in his authentic works, and those teachings attributed to him by the later Advaita tradition, issues centering chiefly on ontology and deity.[14] As examples of discrepancies between Śaṃkara and his Advaitin interpreters Hacker

[13] Allahabad: St. Paul, 1964. The book has been translated into German and French and later expanded.

[14] See especially "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śaṅkaras: Avidyā, Nāmarūpa, Māyā, Iśvara," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 100 (1950):246–286, reprinted in English in Wilhelm Halbfass (ed.), *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*, Albany: SUNY 1995, 57–100. This recovery of the so-called "real" Śaṃkara, it may be noted for the purposes of the present essay, can be seen to parallel the way that twentieth century Christian theologians have learned to distinguish the authentic teaching of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) from the developments of later Neo-Thomist doctrine.

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pointed out among other things the fluidity of Śaṃkara's thinking on *brahman* (the Absolute) and *īśvara* (the Lord), a feature that is uncharacteristic of later Advaita and which has now made possible greater latitude in the contemporary critical interpretation of Śaṃkara's understanding of deity than is characteristic of the more systematizing and definition-oriented thinking of post-Śaṃkara Advaita. Since Hacker, other scholars have made their contribution to a reassessment of Śaṃkara and occasionally to the implications of this new understanding for inter-religious dialogue. Foremost among these has been Richard De Smet. But whereas Hacker was sometimes confrontational in his Christian appraisal of Śaṃkara and the tradition of Advaita, De Smet followed to a greater degree the avenue of correlation wherever possible, and whenever disagreement with mainstream non-dualist doctrine arose he avoided all combative or acrimonious tones.[15]

De Smet, it bears repeating, approached Śaṃkara both as an indologist and as a Roman Catholic theologian, and much of his life's work was devoted to reconciling what he considered to be the authentic teachings of Śaṃkara with Christian thinking on ontology and liberation, especially Christian teaching as expressed by Aquinas. From early on De Smet noted similarities in the theological method and doctrine of the *magister* and the *ācārya*. The examples are numerous, but a few may illustrate this last point. Both Thomas and Śaṃkara, for example, subordinate reason to the authority of revealed scripture.[16] Both teachers make liberation the ultimate goal of their teaching, a liberation that De Smet called "the blissful intellectual experience of the Godhead and the complete cessation of man's ignorance."[17] Further, the views of Śaṃkara and Aquinas on the nature of the supreme reality demonstrate a remarkable convergence. *Brahman* for Śaṃkara and God *in se* for Aquinas are each characterized as absolutely simple and undivided plenitude of being, transcendent, changeless, eternal, free, infinite, and ineffable. De Smet notes, too, the similar use of the analogical method (*lakṣaṇa*) in Śaṃkara and

[15] De Smet knew Hacker and held his work in high regard, even when he expressed outright disagreement with Hacker's illusionistic rendering of Śaṃkara's ontology. See his review of Hacker's *Kleine Schriften* in the *Boletin de la Asociacion Española de Orientalistas* 16 (1980):267–73.

[16] See *The Theological Method of Śaṅkara* (note 3).

[17] "Śaṅkara and Aquinas on Liberation (Mukti)," *Indian Philosophical Annual* 5 (1969):239.

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Aquinas in arriving at a proper theoretical understanding of the Absolute. The three steps of *via affirmationis, via negationis and via eminentiae* employed by Christian scholastics closely correspond to Śaṃkara's use of the triple-method of (1) *adhyāsa* or *adhyāropa*: attempted predication of *brahman* using ordinary meanings of words, (2) *apavāda*: negation or elimination of the finite meanings of these terms, culminating in (3) *paramārtha-lakṣaṇa*: a legitimate supreme indication of *brahman*.[18] Analogy, then, is capable of indirectly indicating the supreme reality without formally or properly defining it. These examples of doctrinal correlation between Śaṃkara and Aquinas are fairly acceptable to Advaitins and are not subject to dispute or controversy. Alleged correlations of a more controversial nature will be treated later.

It was certainly due to De Smet's Thomist persuasions and the similarities he perceived between Śaṃkara and Aquinas that he was led to appreciate the Vedāntin master at all. De Smet regarded Śaṃkara's system as the pinnacle of all the metaphysical systems produced in India's history. It was here, he felt, that Hindu reflective thought most perfectly attained to a correct metaphysical notion of a transcendent Absolute. But it would be wrong to conclude that De Smet regarded Śaṃkara as valuable and his metaphysical position as true only to the degree that the Advaitin concurred with the doctrine of Aquinas. He readily acknowledged the uniqueness of Śaṃkara's contributions to the understanding of deity and world, certainly more so in his later writings than in his essays from the 1950s. The more he studied Śaṃkara and grappled with his thought the more De Smet grew in his regard of the Vedāntin. His many years of thoughtful attention to Śaṃkara's teaching of non-duality, for example, sensitized him to new ways of understanding and articulating the interior presence of the Creator to the creature. A few years prior to his death he wrote, "From Śaṅkara I learned to focus on the non-dualistic creative presence in me—and in all creatures—of the absolute *Brahman* as my constant Ground and Cause and thus supreme *Sākṣin* and *Ātman*."[19]

This last statement reveals an important point to be gleaned from the Śaṃkara-Aquinas comparison: even where numerous doctrinal

[18] See "The Correct Interpretation of the Definitions of the Absolute, according to Śaṃkarācārya and Saint Thomas Aquinas," *Proceedings of the Indian Philosophical Congress*, 1954:6–7; "Forward Steps in Śaṇkara Research," *Darshana International* 26 (1987):45.

[19] De Smet, "Trajectory," p. 21.

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commonalities exist between the *ācārya* and the *magister*, differences of emphasis in the two systems need also be registered. Śaṃkara and Aquinas were not simply saying the same thing in different ways. For Śaṃkara the center around which the whole of his thought revolved was the realization of *brahman* as one's true *ātman*, the liberating experience of the unoriginated and non-dual Ground as one's Self. Aquinas by contrast was oriented to the free historical presence of the divine to the human, culminating in a communion of persons in both love and knowledge. De Smet was convinced of the compatibility of these two types of presence; he even went so far as to declare that ontologically Christian personalism presupposed a non-dualist metaphysics.[20] On the plane of experience, too, non-dualistic presence and personal interactive presence, far from opposing one another, should be regarded as complementary. It cannot be denied, however, that De Smet, Christian theologian that he was, characteristically held the second type of divine presence—a communion based on love—to offer the greater intimacy with the divine and hence to be the more excellent.[21] This was because biblical revelation unveiled a thoroughly personal Deity historically active, yet nonetheless incomprehensible. Not surprisingly, it appears that De Smet saw it as his main theological task as a Christian theologian in dialogue with Advaitin thinkers to open Hindu non-dualistic thought to the possibility that the highest *brahman* was more than a vast ocean of pure consciousness, that it was also capable of love, causation and grace, but in such a way that the simplicity, plenitude and transcendence of the divine were in no way compromised. It is clear that such a view is only possible if non-duality is read as a doctrine of creation rather than as a teaching of illusionistic monism.

Those familiar with the Advaita tradition will no doubt take exception to De Smet's interpretation of *brahman* as cause, more specifically, will dispute the notion that in a non-dualistic metaphysics the higher (*para*) *brahman* could be Creator and supreme Person. This understanding of the Absolute runs counter to orthodox non-dualist doctrine. For Advaitins generally "non-duality" (*a-dvaita*) is taken to mean acosmic illusionism, the denial that anything ultimately exists but the one *brahman*, the supreme reality. Accordingly the active relational

[20] See De Smet, "Advaitavada and Christianity," *The Divine Life* 35 (1973):237–239; "Does Christianity Profess Non-Dualism," *The Clergy Monthly* 37 (1973):354–357.
[21] See De Smet, "Love Versus Identity," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1980):519–526.

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creator God and gracious personal Lord of devotional religion—in both Christian and Hindu traditions—is regarded by Advaitins as a projection of ignorance and relegated to a finally illusory ontological status. De Smet himself was well aware of the novelty of his interpretation of Śaṃkara's non-duality and was quick to acknowledge the discrepancies between his interpretation of Śaṃkara and that of mainstream Advaita. He openly conceded that his understanding of Śaṃkara represented a minority position. Yet he was convinced that it was the true one. Moreover, this understanding of Śaṃkara opened up new possibilities of fruitful dialogue with Christian doctrine and spirituality.

It is in his doctrines of non-dualistic realism and of the personhood of the *para brahman* that some of De Smet's greatest contributions to the encounter between Christian theology and Śaṃkara's Vedānta can be found.[22] The articulation of these doctrines was ordered to two ends: on the one hand, they broadened and deepened the contemporary understanding and appreciation of Śaṃkara's teaching and achievement. On the other hand, a discussion of these two doctrines provided the opportunity for De Smet to correct what he considered Advaitic misunderstandings concerning Christian teaching about God and creation, the elimination of which might eventually lead to a deeper theological encounter between Hindu Advaitins and Christian theologians.

One of the most common objections made by Advaitin thinkers to Christian doctrine is that the God of Christians is not a true Absolute. From the Advaitin perspective the Christian insistence that ultimate reality is personal reveals an all too human and limited conception of deity.[23] In the Advaita critique divine personalism is usually taken for anthropomorphism. It is not therefore surprising that as a result the *nirguṇa brahman* of Śaṃkara's system has been regularly designated "impersonal" by Advaitins since the nineteenth century, when English became an important idiom of Indian thought.

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[22] For a more thorough discussion of what follows see Bradley Malkovsky, "The Personhood of Śaṃkara's *Para Brahman*," *The Journal of Religion* 77 (1997):541–562, especially 555–562.

[23] Looking back on his many years of dialogue, De Smet noted how this was a recurring problem. "How often has a Hindu told me, 'What a pity that you believe in a personal God.'" See De Smet, "Interphilosophical and Religious Dialogue In My Life," in *Pilgrims of Dialogue*, Fr. Albert Nambiaparambil Festschrift, ed. A. Pushparajan (Ernakulam: Sangam Dialogue Centre, 1991), p. 6.

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This reduction of personhood to humanlike nature is understandable given the context of modern usage of the term "personal". But from the point of view of Christian theology the confusion of divine personhood with anthropomorphism by Advaitins is incorrect and has been inhibiting for the Advaita-Christian encounter. "Today it is practically impossible to convince the Hindus that the personal God of Christianity is really the Absolute and as a rule the non-dualists among them consider that the Christians have inherited only an anthropomorphic conception of the Deity."[24]

But "person" need not be understood in such a limited sense. As De Smet explains, the person is "the ultimate subject of . . . attribution of all predicates implying intellectual agency,"[25] a definition that is applicable to both human and divine—but in different ways—and that implies, among other things, freedom and intellectual consciousness: "It . . . is immaterial whether the personal agent is in itself simple, partless, absolute spiritual substance without accidents, and thus pure Consciousness, or whether it is a complex subsistent, comprising parts and functions, spiritual and also corporeal. What matters is that its integrality be predominantly spiritual, i.e. intellectually conscious. This, indeed, is required to make it subject of attribution, ultimate, freely responsible and an end-in-itself."[26]

Terms such as "person," "freedom" and "consciousness" cannot, of course, be used univocally of both the divine and the human, but must be applied analogically to the Absolute, if anthropomorphic reductionism is to be avoided. Yet even after the analogical method has helped ensure that a more precise and accurate understanding of the personhood of the Absolute has been arrived at, the mystery of the Supreme remains. It is never fully penetrated or comprehended; an analogous and elevated understanding of personhood succeeds in only properly indicating that the divine is in some eminent sense personal, but it does not fully express the manner of divine personhood.[27] It is perhaps for this reason that Julius Lipner adds elsewhere: "The Advaitic absolute is trans-personal rather than impersonal. Indeed, when he is constrained to describe Brahman-Ātman

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[24] De Smet, "Towards an Indian View of the Person," in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, ser. 2, ed. M. Chatterjee (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), p. 54.

[25] "Indian View," p. 53.

[26] De Smet, "Is the Concept of 'Person' Congenial to Śaṃkara Vedānta?," *Indian Philosophical Annual* 8 (1972), p. 200.

[27] See De Smet, "Concept," p. 201.

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in positive (analogical) terms, Śaṃkara prefers to use such 'person-predicates' as 'consciousness' and 'bliss.'"[28] The *para brahman*, then, transcends the ordinary human mode of personhood, but is surely not less than personal.

When conceived in this analogical sense, writes De Smet, "there will be no doubt that we may and must say that Brahman even considered in the strict *advaita* perspective of Śaṃkara's Vedānta is most properly and eminently personal, indeed the Super-person. How could the supreme Ātman whose integrality is pure Consciousness and whose freedom is absolute not be supremely personal? Its very *nirguṇatva* and *akhaṇdatva* are the marks of its perfection and fullness as person. The term 'person' is therefore perfectly suitable as an appellation of the absolute Brahman of Advaita Vedānta."[29]

That the Absolute is personal, it must be stressed here, does not require that it be a creator. Neither God in Christian thought nor the supreme *brahman* of Śaṃkara as interpreted by De Smet is necessitated to bring forth a world for the Absolute to be itself. Rather the supreme reality freely chooses to be a world creator and governing *īśvara* without thereby undergoing in the slightest degree a modification of its perfection and fullness.[30]

But is the existence of a real world a logical possibility given the infinity and fullness of being that is *brahman*? Is there a place for the world in an Advaitic metaphysics? For De Smet, only if the world is a contingent reality and is not accorded the same absolute ontological status as its source. Nor, at the other extreme, is the world to be regarded as a mere illusion. According to De Smet, when Śaṃkara uses negations in describing the world such usage must not be understood in an absolute sense, as if Śaṃkara were simply denying the existence of the universe. Rather, Śaṃkara must be regarded as "a radical valuationist who measures everything to the absolute Value, the Brahman, and declares its unequality to it rather than

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[28] Julius Lipner, "Śaṃkara on Metaphor," *Indian Philosophy of Religion*, ed. R. W. Perrett (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), p. 169, n. 9.

[29] De Smet, "Concept," p. 201. No less an authority on Advaitia than T. M. P. Mahadevan declared at a seminar in India in the 1970s on the concept of person that, "if the *Brahman* of Śaṅkara is anything, it is surely not impersonal." See De Smet, "Indian View," p. 51. De Smet attributed this "important linguistic change" regarding the personhood of *brahman* to the influence of Catholic scholars living in India. Mahadevan's affirmation of divine personhood remains a rarity among Advaitin scholars, however.

[30] From a letter to the author, August 4, 1996.

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the degree of its participation of it. This manner of thinking and speaking is legitimate but it has misled many into acosmic interpretations of his doctrine."[31] By contrast, De Smet goes on to say, "St. Thomas generally prefers the language of participation. A participated being is in its own deficient way what the absolute *Esse* is without any restrictions. This *Esse* or Being is not a logical genus but the ontological Reality of God. And its participations are not parts of that partless Reality, nor accidents, complements, explicitations or developments of it, nor in any way additive to it."[32] That is to say, both Aquinas and Śaṃkara attribute the same ontological status to the world; for both of them the world enjoys a relative reality. Their description of the world in either more negative or positive terms is due to their center of reference and chosen emphasis.

Accordingly, Śaṃkara "does not deny the universal causality, lordship, etc. of *brahman*—for they are logically entailed by the true fact of the world's ontological dependence upon it—but only that they affect the simplicity of its essence."[33] *Brahman* is therefore truly and logically the cause and Lord of the universe, but these relations do not subject the divine essence to any change, nor are they ontologically additive to the divine reality.[34] The relations of *brahman* to the world as cause, Lord, and so forth, "cannot be ontological but logical only. They are not intrinsic attributes (*viśeṣaṇa*) but extrinsic denominators (*upādhi*)."[35] Because *brahman* is absolutely simple and a plenitude of being, its perfection cannot be altered by the fact of creation. By contrast, the creature's very being is constituted by its relation or dependence on its source. Thus, summarizes De Smet—and here his debt to Aquinas' distinctions and terminology is manifest—the relation "is real on the side of the creature but merely logical on the side of the Creator."[36] The relation of *brahman* to the world in no way defines the ontological nature of the Absolute. This is what Śaṃkara appears to mean when he says, "Names and forms in all their states have their *ātman* in *brahman* alone, but *brahman* has

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[31] De Smet, "Origin: Creation and Emanation," *Indian Theological Studies* 15 (1978): 275.

[32] De Smet, "Origin," 275.

[33] De Smet, "Radhakrishnan's Interpretation of Śaṇkara," *Radhakrishnan Centenary Volume*, ed. G. Parthasarathi and D. P. Chattopadhyaya (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 62.

[34] "Radhakrishnan's Interpretation," p. 62.

[35] De Smet, "Forward Steps," p. 39.

[36] "Love Versus Identity," p. 522.

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not its *ātman* in them."[37] But the relation of the world to *brahman* defines the ontological nature of the world. It is dependent on its transcendent and immanent source for every facet of its existence and activity.

This much must suffice as an introduction to De Smet's thought. The bibliography at the end of this volume gives an indication of how wide-ranging that thought is, extending far beyond Vedānta and the Christian encounter with Śaṃkara to include comparisons of Christian spirituality and doctrine with Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Sikhism. May the readers of Richard De Smet's writings come to an ever-deepening knowledge of truth and may that knowledge be a source for their spiritual growth and liberation.

[37] Taittirīya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya II.6.1. See also BrSūBh II.1.9.

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ŚAṄKARA AND BUDDHISM

Sengaku Mayeda

I. Preface

It is well-known that Śaṅkara is criticised by his opponents as "a Buddhist in disguise" (*pracchannabauddha*) and his philosophy as *māyāvāda*[1] which is but crypto-Buddhism.

Among the Vedāntins, Bhāskara (750–800) is probably one of the earliest critics against Śaṅkara. He called the Māyāvādin "one who depends on the doctrine of the Buddhist" (*Bauddhamatāvalambin*), and says that this position has been negated by the author of the *Brahmasūtra*.[2] Afterwards, Yāmuna (918–1038), Rāmānuja (1017–1037), Madhva (1197–1276), Vallabha (1473–1531) and other Vedāntins severely criticise the Advaita Vedānta, pointing out that it is in essence nothing but a Buddhist doctrine.[3]

Then, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, Vijñānabhikṣu of the Sāṃkhya school shows in his *Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya* that the *māyāvāda* of the Vedāntins is of the same standpoint as that of the Vijñānavādin's[4] and criticises the Vedānta school as a whole. In justifying his criticism, he quotes a verse from the *Padmapurāṇa* which states that the *māyāvāda* is an incorrect theory and is Buddhist doctrine.[5]

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[1] This paper was read at the International Congress of Vedānta held at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, U.S.A. from April 5 to 8, 1990, which was a conference to celebrate the 1200th anniversary of Śaṅkara.

In fact it is wrong that Śaṅkara's Advaita philosophy is called "*māyāvāda*." Cf. *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṅkara*, tr. with Introduction and Notes by S. Mayeda (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1979), pp. 78–79.

[2] Bhāskara *ad Brahmasūtra* II.2.29.

[3] For a detailed introduction, cf. Hajime Nakamura, *Shoki no Vedānta Tetsugaku* (*Early Vedānta Philosophy*. Tokyo: Iwanami, 1950), pp. 159–161; Yoshiaki Kodate, "Vedānta Tetsugaku to Bukkyo-Kosho no Ichidanmen" ("An Aspect of the Vedānta-Buddhism Relations," *Nihonbukkyogaku Nenpo* 23, 1957) pp. 257–275.

[4] *vijñānavādyekadeśita*, Richard Garbe (ed.), *The Sāṃkhya-Pravacana-Bhāṣya by Vijñānabhikṣu* (Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 11) Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1943, p. 16, line 6.

[5] *māyāvādam asac-chāstram pracchannam bāuddham eva ca* mayāi'*va kathitaṃ, devi, kalāu brāhmaṇa-rūpiṇe* (Uttarakhaṇḍa 43). Vijñānabhikṣu quotes this verse twice in his *Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya*, p. 4 and p. 16.

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This is true of modern scholars. For example, in his *A History of Indian Philosophy*, S. Dasgupta remarks,

> Śaṅkara and his followers borrowed much of their dialectic form of criticism from the Buddhists. His Brahman was very much like the *śūnya* of Nāgārjuna. . . . I am led to think that Śaṅkara's philosophy is largely a compound of Vijñānavāda and Śūnyavāda Buddhism with the Upaniṣad notion of the permanence of self superadded.[6]

Thus he supports Vijñānabhikṣu's criticism against the *māyāvāda.*

Even S. Radhakrishnan who asserts that "there is no doubt that Śaṅkara develops his whole system from the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta Sūtra without reference to Buddhism,"[7] says as follows:

> We need not say that the Advaita Vedānta philosophy has been very much influenced by the Mādhyamika doctrine. . . . the Nirguṇa Brahman of Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna's *śūnya* have much in common.[8]

Śaṅkara, however, vehemently attacks Buddhism here and there in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya, Upadeśasāhasrī* and his other works. What is Buddhism for him and his philosophy? This problem is what I would like to discuss in my paper, examining his view of Buddhism and his attitude toward Buddhism and try to posit him in the history of Vedānta philosophy as properly as possible.

II. Śaṅkara's View of Buddhism

Around the fifth century when Vasubandhu (400–480) was active, there were four major schools in Indian Buddhism; they were the Sarvāstivādin, the Sautrāntika, the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra or Vijñānavādin.[9] It was also the common practice in the Indian philosophical schools in general to distinguish four Buddhist schools when they treated Buddhism. They were the Mādhyamikas, the Yogācāras, the Sautrāntikas, and the Vaibhāṣikas or Sarvāstivādins.[10]

Śaṅkara, however, in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (II,2,18), criticises the

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[6] Vol. I (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1951), pp. 493–494.
[7] *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (New York: Macmillan Co., 1958), p. 472.
[8] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 668.
[9] Y. Kajiyama and S. Kamiyama, *Kū no Ronri: Chūgan* (*The Logic of Śūnyatā: The Mādhyamika Bukkyo no Shiso*, vol. 3) Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1960, p. 171.
[10] For example, cf. *Sarvasiddhāntasaṃgraha, Sarvamatasaṃgraha, Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha*, etc.

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following three different types of Buddhist propounders: (1) *Sarvāstitvavādin* or "one who asserts the real existence of everything," (2) *Vijñānāstitvavādin* or "one who asserts the real existence of consciousness," and (3) *Sarvaśūnyatvavādin* or "one who asserts the emptiness of everything." He keeps silent about any other Buddhist propounders, but if we are to judge from Vācaspatimiśra's sub-commentary *Bhāmatī* on the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*,[11] we can infer that the first propounder, *Sarvāstivavādin* points not only to the Sarvāstivādin but also includes the Sautrāntika.[12] The second and the third propounders clearly refer to the Vijñānavādin and the Mādhyamika respectively. Therefore, it may be possible for us to see Śaṅkara's classification corresponding to that made in the general Indian philosophical treatises except the order of classification.

It is indeed certain that Śaṅkara is well aware of the terms Mādhyamika[13] and Vijñānavādin[14] since he uses these terms in his own works when he surveys Buddhist positions. Nevertheless, why does he use in the above instance of his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* the terms *Sarvāstivavādin, Vijñānāstitvavādin* and *Sarvaśūnyatvavādin*, other instances of which cannot be found elsewhere? He gives no explanation of these terms at all. Why does he not use such names as Mādhyamika and Vijñānavādin but such terms as *Sarvāstivavādin, Vijñānāstitvavādin* and *Sarvaśūnyatvavādin*?

It seems to me that the context where Śaṅkara criticises other schools including the above Buddhists gives us a clue to solve this problem. Before Śaṅkara begins to criticise the three kinds of Buddhist propounders, he takes up the Vaiśeṣika school for his sharp criticism and characterises it as *Ardhavainā́śika* or "semi-nihilism." In this connection he classifies Buddhism as *Sarvavainā́śikarāddhānta* or "the doctrine which asserts the nihilism of everything," and it is after this that he undertakes the above classification of the Buddhist propounders. In

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[11] *yady api vaibhāṣikasautrāntikayor avāntaramatabhedo'sti, tathāpi sarvāstitāyām asti saṃpratipattir ity ekīkṛtyopanyāsaḥ; tathā ca tritvam upapannam iti, Bhāmatī*, II.2.18.

[12] E. Kanakura, *Vedānta Tetsugaku no Kenkyū* (*A Study of the Vedānta Philosophy*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1932), pp. 151–153. In such Buddhist works as *Tattvaratnāvalī* and *Jñānasārasamuccaya*, we can also see how Buddhist doctrine is distinguished into four schools. Cf. S. Yamaguchi, *Chūgan Bukkyo Ronko* (*A Study of the Mādhyamika*), pp. 292ff.; H. Ui, "Shinri no Hokan" ("Tattvaratnāvalī," *Nagoya Daigaku Kenkyū Ronshū* III, 1952), pp. 1ff., H. Nakamura, *Indoshiso no Shomondai*, p. 528.

[13] Śaṅkara *ad Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, IV.3.7, p. 567, lines 9–10 (Ānandāśrama S. S. 15, 1939).

[14] Ibid., p. 572, lines 8–9; Śaṅkara *ad Brahmasūtra*, II.2.28, p. 467, line 4 (Bombay: Nirṇaya-Sāgar Press, 1934).

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other words, in his understanding the philosophical school which bears the name of Vaiśeṣika is characterized as "semi-nihilism," and similarly in the case of Buddhism, he presents his understanding of Buddhism in general as "that doctrine which asserts the nihilism of everything."

From the above observation we can safely infer that, in treating the three types of Buddhist propounders, Śaṅkara intended to express the specific character of the particular Buddhist school in a word succinctly as in the case of the Vaiśeṣika school and that for this reason he did not use the usual names of the schools like Mādhyamika. In short Śaṅkara is not simply enumerating the names of the Buddhist schools here in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* but is making an attempt at "critical classification of the doctrines" from his own philosophical standpoint.

It is to be noted here that in the description of the characteristics of the three Buddhist propounders, terms *-astitva* and *-śūnyatva* which have to do with reality or ontological judgement are employed. Śaṅkara makes his classification of Buddhism based on the criterion of what is asserted as real or, in other words, from his ontological point of view. He applies this criterion to each Buddhist school and in his attempt to present coherent expressions, his use of the terms *Sarvāstitvavādin, Vijñānāstitvavādin*, and *Sarvaśūnyatvavādin* are indeed appropriate.

If the same criterion is to be applied to Buddhism as a whole, as mentioned above, Buddhism would come down to *Sarvavainā́śikarāddhānta* or "that doctrine which asserts the nihilism of everything." This is because, not to mention *Sarvaśūnyatvavādin*, the *Vijñānāstitvavādin* as well as the *Sarvāstitvavādin* asserts the theory of *kṣaṇabhaṅga* or "that of entities having but momentary existence"[15] and therefore, in Śaṅkara's understanding, Buddhism as a whole is a doctrine which asserts total nihilism.

Also, in explaining why there is a plurality of Buddhist positions, Śaṅkara points out the difference in disciples' innate ability of understanding (*pratipattibheda*) and says as follows:

> . . . the doctrine of the reality of the external world (*bāhyārthavāda*) was indeed propounded by the Buddha conforming himself to the mental

[15] Śaṅkara *ad Brahmasūtra*, II.2.31.

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> state of some of his disciples whom he perceived to be attached to external things; but it does not represent his own true view (*Sugatābhiprāya*) according to which consciousness alone (*vijñānaikaskandha*) is real.[16]

For Śaṅkara, even that Buddhist theory which asserts that consciousness alone is real is nihilistic without a morsel of rationality (*upapatti*). Śaṅkara adds that it is not possible to lead one's ordinary life on the basis of such a nihilistic view.

And finally he concludes his criticism against the Buddha and Buddhism with the following words:

> No further special discussion is in fact required. From whatever new points of view the Bauddha system is tested with reference to its probability, it gives way on all sides, like the walls of a well dug in sandy soil. It has, in fact, no foundation whatever to rest upon, and hence the attempts to use it as a guide in the practical concerns of life are mere folly. Moreover, Buddha by propounding the three mutually contradictory systems, teaching respectively the reality of external world, the reality of consciousness only, and total nihilism, has himself made it clear either that he was a man given to make incoherent assertions, or else that hatred of all beings induced him to propound absurd doctrines by accepting which they would become thoroughly confused. . . . Buddha's doctrine has to be entirely disregarded by all those who have a regard for their own happiness.[17]

III. Śaṅkara's Assertion of Originality of the Advaita Philosophy

As I have already mentioned in the beginning of this paper, there appeared many critics against Śaṅkara and his followers. It is very probably that those critics appeared not only after Śaṅkara's death but also already during his lifetime. In fact, Śaṅkara himself explicitly admits in his *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣatkārikābhāṣya*[18] that Buddhism is said to be in close similarity to the Advaita of his *paramaguru* Gauḍapāda:

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[16] Ibid., II.2.28.

[17] Ibid., II.2.32.

[18] *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣatkārikābhāṣya*, IV.99, p. 182 (Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvaliḥ, sampuṭaḥ 4. Śrīvānīvilāsamudrāyantrālayaḥ, n.d.). There is a problem concerning the authenticity of this commentary. Cf. S. Mayeda, "On the Author of the *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad*and the *Gauḍapādīya-Bhāṣya*," *The Adyar Library Bulletin*, vols. 31–32, 1967–68, pp. 73–94; T. Vetter, "Zur Bedeutung des Illusionismus bei Śaṅkara," *Festschrift für Erich Frauwallner*, WZKSO 12/13 (1968), pp. 407–409; P. Hacker, "Notes on the *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad* and Śaṅkara's *Āgamaśāstravivaraṇa*," *P. Hacker Kleine Schriften* (Wiesbaden:

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> [This] knowledge regarding the Ultimate Reality, non-dual and characterised by the absence of the difference of knowledge, object of knowledge, and knower, «is not the same as that declared by the Buddha». [The view of the Buddha,] which rejects the existence of external objects and asserts the existence of consciousness alone, is said to be similar to or very near the truth of non-dual Ātman. But this knowledge of the non-dual which is the Ultimate Reality can be attained through Vedānta alone.[19]

Here in this passage Śaṅkara recognizes the Buddhists' denial of the real existence of the external objects and their acceptance of the real existence of consciousness only as the points of similarity of Buddhism, which is the doctrine of the Vijñānavādin in this case, to the truth of non-dual Ātman, i.e. Advaita Vedānta.[20]

On the other hand, critics against Buddhism like Vijñānabhikṣu also criticise as the point of the similarity between Advaita and Buddhism that assertion of both schools regarding the non-real existence of the external objects, or of the non-reality of phenomenal world. This view, which is so-called *māyāvāda*, is that very point with regard to which Śaṅkara also admits that the Advaita Vedānta is criticised as similar to Buddhism. This is an important problem which touches on the very basis of the two schools.

It is indeed true, as described above, that, if both the Advaitins and the Buddhists equally assert the non-reality of the phenomenal world, then nobody can deny that the severe criticism that Advaita is the same as or similar to the Buddhist doctrine is well-founded. However, Śaṅkara and his followers have rejected their opponents' criticism, emphasizing their own originality.

In the case of Śaṅkara, as is seen in the above quoted passage from his *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣatkārikābhāṣya*, he finds the Advaitins' originality in the following two points: firstly the Advaita philosophy expounds the non-dual, Ultimate Reality which, unlike the Vijñānavādins' *vijñāna*

Franz Steiner Verlag, GmbH, 1978), pp. 252–254, note 2. Previously, K. Kumada, taking the hint from this *Kārikā*, IV.99, wrote "The Fundamental Difference between Buddhistic and Vedantic Philosophies," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*, vol. IX, no. 1, 1961, pp. 410–403. There are different controversies concerning the interpretation of IV.99 of the *Kārikā*, but I deal only with Śaṅkara's commentary in this article.

[19] *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣatkārikābhāṣya*, IV.99.

[20] The same attitude is found in such Śaṅkara's followers as Sarvajñātman, the author of *Saṃkṣepaśārīraka* (II.22–6) who is traditionally said to be a disciple of Sureśvara (720–770), one of Śaṅkara's direct disciples.

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consisting of three components,[21] i.e. knowledge, object of knowledge, and knower, does not possess any components like those, and secondly the Advaita philosophy is based on the absolute authority of the Upaniṣads. It is on the same points that Sarvajñātman sees the difference between the Vedāntins and the Vijñānavādins in his *Saṃkṣepaśārīraka* (II,27–38).

When Śaṅkara and his followers attack the Vijñānavādin, ultimately the two above points, especially the point that the Vijñānavādins do not recognize an eternal, unchangeable *Ātman*, are the target of criticism. Likewise in the case of Śaṅkara's negation of the Mādhyamika philosophy he shows the difference between the Mādhyamikas and his own position in the fact that the Mādhyamikas do not accept the basis of reality which is the Ātman of the fourth stage and, for this reason, criticises the doctrine of *śūnyatā* or emptiness (Śaṅkara *ad Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad* I,8).

Also, Padmapāda (720–770), one of Śaṅkara's disciples, alludes to the doctrine of *śūnyatā* in the expression "*niradhiṣṭhānādhyāsavādipakṣa*" or "the standpoint of the propounder who asserts that the superimposition (*adhyāsa*) has no foundation" and criticizes this point of the doctrine of *śūnyatā*.[22]

In this way, the attacks against the Mādhyamikas are based on the point that it does not accept an eternal unchangeable reality which lies in the background as the foundation of the phenomenal world. Even those Hīnayāna schools which recognize the reality of objects of the external world do not differ from the Mādhyamikas and the Vijñānavādins at all according to Śaṅkara since they do not recognize a persistent substratum as far as they hold the theory of entities having but momentary existence (*kṣaṇabhaṅga*). As such, all Buddhist doctrines are nothing but nihilistic doctrines (*Vaināśika*) "not to be taken into serious consideration by those who are seeking ultimate bliss."[23]

In this connection the *ālayavijñāna* of the Vijñānavādins may come into question. It is the substratum of transmigratory existence assumed

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[21] The expression *jñānajñeyajñātṛbhedarahitam* likely presupposes *grāhyagrāhaka-saṃvittibhedavān* seen in Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* II.354. Incidentally, this famous verse is quoted in Śaṅkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī* II,18,142. Cf. my article "Śaṅkara to Bukkyo," ("Śaṅkara and Buddhism," *Bukkyo Kenkyū* 3, 1973), pp. 104–189.

[22] *Pañcapādikā* (Madras: Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, 1958), p. 62, line 5—p. 63, line 4.

[23] *sarvathāpy ādaraṇīyo. . . . śreyaskāmair, Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II.2.32, p. 479).

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by them and corresponds to the unchangeable substratum, that is, the Ātman of the fourth stage whose existence is strongly asserted by the Śāṅkara school. Śaṅkara's critique against this *ālayavijñāna* is found in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*:

> [In the Vijñānavāda doctrine] the so-called *ālayavijñāna* is by mistake considered to be the substratum of residual impressions and also being admittedly momentary, this *ālayavijñāna* is essentially something unstable, and similar to the active consciousness (*pravṛttivijñāna*); it can never be the substratum of residual impressions. This is because unless there exists one persistent entity which is equally connected with the past, the present, and the future, or an absolutely unchangeable [eternal Ātman] which cognizes everything, then we are unable to account for daily activities like memory and recognition which are subject to residual impressions dependent on place, time and cause. On the other hand, if you declare your *ālayavijñāna* to be by nature permanent, you thereby abandon your tenet [of the *ālayavijñāna* as well as everything else being momentary.][24]

The Vijñānavādins recognize the *ālayavijñāna* as the substratum of residual impressions, but as they accept its momentariness, Śaṅkara denies the possibility of its being the substratum. In Śaṅkara's view our daily activities like memory and recognition would presuppose the existence of a continuous entity (*anvayin*) that persists in all the three times, past, present and future, or else, an unchangeable, permanent (*kūṭasthanitya*), quiescent Ātman. Therefore, this Ātman is essentially different from the *ālayavijñāna*.

Śaṅkara's Ātman and the Vijñānavādins' *ālayavijñāna* each arose from different backgrounds and long historical traditions. Even if they differ in essence, they show mutual similarity in their function that they exercise within each system, and as both of the two systems equally assert the non-reality of the phenomenal world, they both belong to a similar monistic standpoint.

In this context it is quite interesting to note the following fact: Buddhist philosophers, Śāntarakṣita (725–788) and Kamalaśīla (740–796), point out that there is a "slight mistake" (*alpāparādha*) in the Advaita,[25] in other words the difference between their own and the

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[24] *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, II.2.31, p. 478.

[25] *Tattvasaṃgraha* 7 (Ātmaparīkṣā, Aupaniṣadikātmaparīkṣā), v.330 and *Pañjikā* on it (Bauddhabhāratīgranthamālā. Vāraṇasī, 1938), pp. 156–157. According to H. Nakamura, the Advaita here introduced by Śāntarakṣita is a little different from Śaṅkara's and seems to be near that of *Māṇḍūkyakārikā* IV (*Early Vedānta Philosophy*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1950, pp. 392–393.)

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Advaita standpoint, which lies in their understanding of the nature of *vijñāna*; seen from the side of Buddhism, the difference or the originality of each lies in the understanding of the nature of *vijñāna* and of Ātman, Pure consciousness. The Buddhist side criticises the eternal nature of the Ātman while the Vedānta side attacks the momentariness of *vijñāna*. Here is the last line on which neither side could by any means concede to the other from the theoretical point of view.

IV. Śaṅkara's Position in the History of the Vedānta Philosophy

Then, how has the Vedānta school, which is representative of the orthodox (*āstika*) Brahmanical traditions, come to assume close similarities to Buddhism, which is representative of the non-orthodox (*nāstika*) traditions?

The "vedāntinization" of Buddhism did not start just at the time of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. As is well known , in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, which was probably composed around the year 400 A.D., *tathāgatagarbha* or the matrix-embryo of the *tathāgata* was not only at times identified with *ālayavijñāna*,[26] but the definition of this *tathāgatagarbha* was also very similar to the definition of Brahman in the Vedānta. Besides, Brahman, Viṣṇu, and Īśvara are also used as synonyms of *tathāgata* and the highest Brahman comes to be regarded as the ultimate state.[27] In the same sūtra, Mahāprajñā Bodhisattva raises the question to the Buddha as to whether the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* is not the same as the heretical *Ātman* doctrine (*tīrthakarātmavāda*).[28]

The question, of course, needs a further detailed investigation, but it seems to me that even though Buddhism had long been taking the doctrinal standpoint of denying the existence of Ātman (*nairātmya*), Buddhism was gradually in the process of moving towards monism, negating pluralism of the Hīnayāna Buddhism, especially the *Sarvāstivādins*, and included such notions as *tathāgatagarbha* and *ālayavijñāna* into the Buddhist doctrines; the inclusion of such notions reveals to us

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[26] *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, ed. by Bunyiu Nanjio (Bibl. Otaniensis, vol. I, Kyoto, 1923), p. 221, line 12; p. 235, lines 7 and 16. Cf. J. Takasaki, *Nyoraizo-shiso no Keisei* (*Formation of the Tathāgatagarbha Thought*) (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1974), pp. 326–328.

[27] *niṣṭhābhāvaḥ paraṃ brahma*, *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, p. 153, line 9.

[28] *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, p. 77, line 13—p. 79, line 9. Cf. H. Nakamura, *Early Vedānta Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. 199–204.

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the weakening of Buddhism as a social force and the revival of Brahmanism and Hinduism and the consequent brahmanization or "vedāntinization" of Buddhism. The tendency towards a monistic way of thinking is the one great current that runs through the orthodox line of the history of Indian thought from the time of the *Rgveda*.[29]

On the other hand, the Vedānta school was formed with the *Brahmasūtra* as its foundation in the fifth century, comparatively later than other philosophical schools including Buddhist schools; the Vedānta school established a system of Brahmanic monism, based upon the Upaniṣads, and especially in reacting to the then rather influential Sāṃkhya school.

However, this realistic monism of the *Brahmasūtra* was of a character of difference-and-non-difference (*bhedābheda*), i.e. a dualistic monism, as it were. In denying such a standpoint and in the process of developing towards an absolute monism (*advaita*), that is, the Upaniṣadic thought of the identity of Brahman and Ātman, the realistic monism of the *Brahmasūtra* was gradually transformed and moved closer and closer to the Buddhism which had a more advanced theoretical system than the Vedānta. While doing so, this Vedānta philosophy came to be "buddhisticized" considerably.

The gradual process of "buddhisticization" of the Vedānta school is reflected in the four chapters of the *Māṇḍūkyakārikā* of Gauḍapāda (640–690) in the seventh century. This "buddhisticization" of the Vedānta school reached its highest point in the fourth chapter of this work.[30]

What Śaṅkara, born in South India in the eighth century, found before him were: firstly, the Mīmāṃsā school which was very flourishing with excellent theoreticians like Kumārila (650–700), Prabhākara (ca. 700), Maṇḍanamiśra (680–720) and others; secondly, a big wave of popular Hinduism which penetrated in leaps and bounds through the masses, and thirdly, a weakening, esoteric-oriented Buddhism which was the target of strong criticisms of Kumārila and others'; fourthly, a thoroughly "buddhisticized" Vedānta school.

Just as Dayānanda Sarasvatī (1828–1883) severely criticised the downfall of Hinduism in the nineteenth century with the cry "return

[29] H. von Glasenapp, *Vedānta und Buddhismus* (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Abh. der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jahrgang 1950, Nr. 11), pp. 1014–1015.

[30] Cf. my article "Śaṅkara to Bukkyo," p. 104.

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to the Vedas," in the same way Śaṅkara in his days, beholding the prosperity of the Mīmāṃsā school and the depolorable situation of his own Vedānta school, must have proclaimed "return to the Vedas." This must be the reason why there is no one who has left us so many commentaries of Upaniṣads as Śaṅkara.

Aiming at the revival of the Vedānta school from the standpoint of orthodox Brahmanism, Śaṅkara practically almost ignored popular Hinduism which stressed *bhakti*, heaped severe criticism against the Mīmāṃsā school which had no interest in the knowledge of Brahman at all, breaking the former close relationship between the Mīmāṃsā school and the Vedānta school, and devoted himself to the knowledge of Brahman which is the most important topic of the Upaniṣads. On the other hand, vis-à-vis Buddhism, using his profound knowledge of Buddhism, he transmuted Buddhist doctrines in the *Māṇḍūkyakārikā* into Advaitism; in other words, he re-injected the Upaniṣadic spirit into the extremely "buddhisticized" *Māṇḍūkyakārikā* of his *paramaguru*, pouring new life into it as it were, giving it an interpretation that followed the line of Vedānta school and achieved the re-"vedāntinization" of the "buddhisticized" Vedāntic tradition.[31]

In this way, Buddhist doctrines, which had been absorbed into the pre-Śaṅkaran Vedānta philosophy and constituted an integral part of the *Māṇḍūkyakārikā*, were preserved without being removed and were vedāntinized by Śaṅkara. As the result the realistic monism of the *Brahmasūtra* was transformed and developed into an illusionistic non-dualism which, as he himself recognized, closely resembled the Buddhist doctrine.[32]

V. Conclusion

From the above discussions it may be now clear that Śaṅkara is neither responsible for the buddhisticization of the Vedānta tradition nor is "a Buddhist in disguise" (*pracchannabauddha*) at all. It might be Gauḍapāda, the author of the *Māṇḍūkyakārikā*, or his predecessors, and not Śaṅkara who can be called "a Buddhist in disguise." For Śaṅkara, Buddhism is an important target to overcome. For this rea-

[31] Cf. my article "On the Author of the *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad-* and the Gauḍapādīya-Bhāṣya," pp. 88–93.
[32] Cf. my article "Śaṅkara to Bukkyo," p. 103.

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son he attacks it very severely here and there in his works. Śaṅkara was an epoch-making reformer in the history of Vedānta who turned the extremely buddhisticized tradition of Vedānta towards the Vedāntic Vedānta or Upaniṣadic Vedānta.[33]

[33] This may be one of the reasons why Śaṅkara was more rigid and stricter with regard to the problem of caste than the author of the *Brahmasūtra* as well as his followers.

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ŚAṂKARA'S THEOLOGICAL REALISM: THE MEANING AND USEFULNESS OF GODS (*DEVATĀ*) IN THE *UTTARA MĪMĀṂSĀ SŪTRA BHĀṢYA*

Francis X. Clooney, S. J.

I. Balance and Comprehensiveness in the Study of Śaṃkara

An integral understanding of Śaṃkara's Advaita Vedānta requires attention to three dimensions: the philosophical, the exegetical (or commentarial), and I provisionally call the "religious."

First, we must continue to investigate Advaita as a philosophical system which proposes correct ways of understanding the world and its significance for human beings. The Western study of Vedānta began with interest in these philosophical aspects, along with allied mystical themes. This focus reached maturity early on, with Paul Deussen's remarkably perceptive books on the upaniṣads and Vedānta. Indeed, much of what has since been written on Advaita Vedānta as a philosophical system inevitably repeats basic themes already identified by Deussen, although some modern interpreters, such as Eliot Deutsch, have more systematically elaborated Vedānta as a philosophical system. Paul Hacker, Wilhelm Halbfass and others have brought a greater depth and focus to this study, greatly enriching our understanding of the specific nature of the Vedānta mode of reasoning.[1]

The fact that so much of the scholarly interest in Vedānta has been philosophical in orientation has made it improbable that much attention would be given to the exegetical dimensions of the tradition. Nevertheless, Richard De Smet, P. M. Modi and others have shown us that Vedānta is above all a theological system, albeit one that is possessed of very important philosophical elements. It is a

[1] The most influential book in the philosophical study of Śaṃkara is still Paul Deussen's *The System of the Vedānta according to Bādarāyaṇa's Brahma-Sūtras and Śaṃkara's Commentary*, translated by Charles Johnston (New York: Dover Publications, 1973 [1883]). For a focused presentation of the opinion that Vedānta can be read as a philosophical system, see Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1969).

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highly refined way of critical thinking that nevertheless subordinates reason to revelation, and accepts specific texts (oral or written) as the privileged expressions of revelation. Still, this larger theological framework is overlooked by most scholars who write about Vedānta; Śaṃkara the commentator and theologian is neglected in favor of Śaṃkara the philosopher. This is surely unfortunate, since Śaṃkara's writings are almost exclusively commentaries, along with arguments adduced in support of exegesis, and since the exegesis, highly interesting in itself, is illuminative of basic patterns of Vedānta thought. Much more attention must be given to the commentarial aspect of the Vedānta tradition and the study of Śaṃkara, if these are to be understood integrally; in such a context, the genuine philosophical dimensions of the tradition will appear all the more interesting and vital.[2]

Yet it is also true that the concerns of exegesis are by nature detailed, specific, and very technical; despite the pedagogical value of learning to read with the commentators, the perspective of the exegete can serve as the point of entry for only a few readers. Unless one is prepared to read in a particular and historically conditioned way that developed for certain reasons, some of the large questions that vex the traditional exegete will not arise, while questions that fascinate the modern reader will never receive adequate attention. By contrast, discussions of self, ignorance, and ultimate reality, though actually rather obscure, seem to provide the reader an easier starting point; to most of us, philosophy seems more accessible than careful exegesis.

The challenge then is to ground speculative considerations on ostensibly universal themes—such as *brahman* and *ātman*—in the specific

[2] For a recognition of the importance of Vedānta as a theological system, see Richard De Smet, S. J.'s unpublished doctoral dissertation, *The Theological Method of Śaṃkara* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1953), P. M. Modi's two volume *A Critique of the Brahmasūtra (III.2.11–IV) with Reference to Śaṃkarācārya's Commentary* (Baroda: private publication, 1956), and Francis X. Clooney, S. J., *Theology after Vedānta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). Modi's work constitutes a powerful critique of Śaṃkara's reading of Bādarāyaṇa, and therefore ultimately raises important philosophical questions: by Modi's reading, Śaṃkara is to some extent an innovator who introduced new (and sometimes unnecessary) problems into the exposition of the Vedānta. Of broad value too are the essays of Paul Hacker, recently collected in *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedanta*, edited by Wilhelm Halbfass (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), and Wilhelm Halbfass's own essays in *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

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contexts where they originated and belong, and to show in a convincing fashion how these meld into a single theological system. While there is a necessary and fruitful tension between the apparently universal accessibility of philosophy and the pedagogical particularity of exegesis, it is necessary to investigate more closely the connections between the two, and to find ways to pursue the two together.

The integral study of Advaita Vedānta today therefore can be aided by attention to a third dimension, Vedānta's positive religious elements, what might simply be called its "religious realities." There are numerous such religious realities in Vedānta, the various entities, categories and structures found within a realm accessible to language and ordinary experience—the ordinary (*vyavahārika*), be it *vaidika* or *laukika*. Such realities include physical bodies and material elements, the individual self (*jīva*), the vital force (*prāṇa*), ritual practice (*karma*) and meditational practice (*upāsanā*), cosmological accounts of the post-mortem journey and the multitude of Vedic *devatā*s which comprise the major topic of this essay.

These mark the discourse of Vedānta as generated from a religious culture: granting large themes and exegetical details, what is it that a Vedānta thinker is actually talking about, when either philosophizing or theologizing? Granting that philosophy and exegesis intersect, where is the common ground on which they meet? It lies, I suggest, in the specifically Vedānta treatment of the religious realities that make up the bulk of the texts and which occupy the exegete, that are questioned and analyzed and generalized in the course of speculation. They are useful intermediate objects of study; by nature they are more concrete and specific than the larger concepts which the Vedānta puts forward so prominently, and likewise more substantial than the procedures of reading and meditating which constitute the practical Vedānta. They afford us a way of understanding both the concepts and the exegeses more concretely and substantively.

Such religious realities mark a middle ground comprised of a range of terms which are neither the ultimate concepts/claims of Vedānta, nor untransformed realities. They may exist outside Vedānta, but they are also located with particular significance and purpose within Vedānta, in the communication of its own viewpoints, in particular serving to shore up and make coherent its primary positions. If we are to understand Śaṃkara adequately and usefully, we must learn to traverse this constructive, substantive middle ground of plural realities. By attention to them, we can learn to read the Vedānta texts

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more completely, sensitive to the literary dynamics that underlie both the composition of the Vedānta texts and our reading of them. In turn, this provides us with a basis for a more complete understanding of how the Vedānta works as an intellectual whole that is brought to bear on each particular issue.

If we adhere, loosely, to the three areas of Vedānta already noted—the philosophical, the exegetical, and the religious—we can thematize three integral dimensions of the Vedānta project. First, *brahman* is primary. It is the source of the intelligibility of material reality, and knowledge of *brahman* is the final goal for all intelligent beings, human or other. Its primacy must be defended at every point, and all potentially competing centers of attention—independent human and divine selves, a pre-existent material substrate—must be redefined so as to be relegated to a secondary position. In Advaita Vedānta, this means too that the *ātman*, which is ultimately non-different from *brahman*, is likewise primary. This emphasis on *brahman* (*ātman*) is the speculative or philosophical dimension of Vedānta.

Second, this knowledge, even if it is essentially self-knowledge, is made reliably accessible only through the Veda, which is authoritative and reliable, which must be learned by those seeking liberation, and which must be taken seriously in all its detail. This is the exegetical dimension of Vedānta.

Third, as a comprehensive explanatory system which strives toward an understanding of non-duality, Vedānta must therefore also find room for an enormous amount of detail, the religious realities which I highlighted in the first part of this essay. These must be convincingly explained in their positive detail and in a way that is coherent with other Vedānta principles. This is the religious dimension of Vedānta.

The integration of these three concerns constitutes Vedānta as a complete theological system; yet this integration cannot be affirmed merely by simultaneously asserting that the several perspectives on reality all fit together. I suggest that by closer attention to the third, the realm of religious realities, we will make great progress in understanding the unity of the entire Vedānta enterprise; as Vedānta articulates the significance of these realities, philosophical and exegetical concerns are focused, and become better able to be addressed from a unified perspective.

Let us see how all this works out in regard to one of the mediating religious realities, the old pantheon of Vedic gods, the *devatā*s.

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Although these *devatā*s are of only secondary importance within the overall scheme of Vedānta, when properly situated, they provide us with valuable insights into the Vedānta principles of wider interest.

II. Śaṃkara's Understanding of *Devatā* in the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtra Bhāṣya*

I will examine Śaṃkara's teaching on *devatā*s in the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtra Bhāṣya* according to three assertions: first, *devatās are not reducible to material realities, but have a role in establishing and maintaining the intelligibility of lesser beings*; second, *devatā*s *are real, personal beings who interact with humans*; third, *however importantly devatā*s *function in relation to the material and the ritual, they remain secondary and dependent.* Let us consider each in turn, as exemplified in the text. All three of these considerations can be illustrated from the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtra Bhāṣya* which, in turn, had picked up on the wide variety of attitudes toward *devatā* in the upaniṣads.[3]

First, *devatā*s *are not reducible to material realities, but have a role in establishing and maintaining the intelligibility of lesser beings.* In the upaniṣads there are subtle interconnections and gradations between the psychological/"human" (*adhyātmika*), the material (*adhibhautika*), and the divine (*adhidaivata*). In their upaniṣadic commentaries, the Vedāntins handle these possibilities variously, without expending undue effort in order to decide whether *devatā*s are the same as or different from other beings in the world. Indeed, one looks in vain for any extended effort by Śaṃkara in his upaniṣadic commentaries even to describe just what a *devatā* is; this is not necessary in the course of exegesis, and Śaṃkara seems generally content with the meanings that appear

[3] In his *Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, Paul Deussen nicely captures a sense of the range of upaniṣadic views of the *devatā*s: "The existence of the ancient Vedic gods Indra, Agni, Varuna, etc., is as little denied by the Upanishads as that of the Greek by Xenophanes. But as by the latter all the other gods equally with men are subordinated to the one god, so in the Upanishads all the ancient Vedic gods are created by the ātman and dependent on him. From the ātman proceed, like the sparks from the fire, all worlds, all living beings, and no less all gods; on him all the gods depend; by him they were created as the guardians of the universe . . . Just as the power of the gods is dependent on *Brahman*, so their knowledge also is imperfect; they are not in possession from the very beginning of the knowledge of *Brahman*." (pp. 173–175.) As we shall see, the Vedānta makes use of these various limited and functional roles of the *devatā*s, giving to them a specific, real and important role, within expected limits.

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evident in one or another upaniṣadic contexts. In the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtra Bhāṣya*, however, the systematic nature of the theological project requires a decisive treatment of certain problems; in some cases, the relationship of the *adhidaivata* to the *adhibhautika* and *adhyātmika* has to be resolved and the role of *devatā*s more sharply defined, as the following key examples will show.

Let us begin with a relatively straightforward passage, in which the relationship between *devatā*s and material realities is clearly set forth. In 2.1.4–11, the primary goal is to refute the Sāṃkhya claim that material reality has its own inner dynamism, and that its order and direction do not require any intelligent source for material reality, or *brahman* as a material cause for the world.

At 2.1.5, in response to the objection that intelligence is often attributed to material beings which might in normal circumstances been thought lacking in consciousness—the wind speaks, the fire boasts, the sky grew angry—the pūrvapakṣin asserts that these material entities do not actually have consciousness intrinsic to them. For the Veda clearly divides the world into two parts, some entities having intelligence, others lacking it. When material entities are described in a way that makes it seem as if they have intelligence, this indicates the guiding role played by intelligent and purposeful *devatā*s who have identified themselves with some aspect of material reality and guide it. In elucidating this pūrvapakṣa, Śaṃkara cites a text we shall see again shortly: "Fire (*agni*) became speech and entered the mouth; wind (*vāyu*) became vital breath (*prāṇa*) and entered the nose; the sun (*āditya*) became sight (*cakṣuḥ*) and entered the eye . . ." (*Aitareya Upaniṣad* 1.2.4).[4] Such texts, it is claimed, show a clear distinction between matter and intelligent, supervisory *devatā*s, so there is no need for the more ambitious postulation of an overall source of intelligence, or for *brahman* as a intelligent material cause who imbues matter with intelligibility and even with some limited intelligence.

In *sūtra* 6 the siddhāntin rejects the idea that there is a material reality which is entirely distinct from *brahman* and merely unintelligible;

[4] Throughout, translations are my own. For the upaniṣads, I have used the critical edition by V. P. Limaye and R. D. Vadekar, *Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads* vol. 1 (Poona: Vaidika Saṃsodhana Mandala, 1958). For Śaṃkara, I have used two editions: *Brahmasūtra Śaṃkara Bhāṣya with the commentaries Bhāṣyaratnaprabhā, Bhāmatī, and Nyāyanirṇaya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), and *Brahmasūtra Śaṃkara Bhāṣya with the commentaries Bhāmatī, Kalpataru and Parimala* (2 volumes, Ahmedabad: Parimal Publications, 1981).

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the hypothesis that *devatā*s guide material realities and so explain how they act in an ordered fashion is not sufficient evidence in support of the proposed alternative viewpoint. For it is not possible to attribute primordial knowledge about the world to the *devatā*s; the siddhāntin cites several *śruti* and *smṛti* texts to show that the *devatā*s are inadequate in this regard. Therefore, *devatā*s cannot be expected to play a large role in the explanation of the universe. But the siddhāntin does not dispute the implication that there might be an intermediate role for *devatā*s, in relation to specific material entities. It seems that there is a consensus position agreed on by both pūrvapakṣin and siddhāntin—*devatā*s can be conceded the role of providing a necessary supplement to unconscious material reality. But in the siddhāntin's view, any such role would still depend on *brahman*, who remains the sole original source and guide which makes the world intelligible.[5]

A second important passage is 2.4.14–16, which explores the relationship of the sense organs and vital elements to their guiding *devatā*s. But this *adhikaraṇa* must be introduced by prior consideration of two other *adhikaraṇa*s, 2.4.9 and 3.3.43. At 2.4.9, an unidentified *śruti* text is adduced: "That which is *prāṇa* is *vāyu*, and this *vāyu* is fivefold: *prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna*, and *samāna*."[6] This prompts an inquiry about whether *prāṇa*s—as one or as five—are distinct, or are merely evolved representations of that *vāyu* from which the upaniṣad traces them. Yet another text, *Chāndogya* (3.18.4), seems to distinguish *vāyu* and *prāṇa*: "*Prāṇa* indeed is a quarter of *brahman*, it shines and heats, by *vāyu* and *jyotiḥ*." Between the extreme views which would equate *prāṇa* and *vāyu* or separate them entirely, a middle ground is sought, by which both kinds of text can be respected. It is decided that although *vāyu* and *prāṇa* cannot be separated, there is a necessary distinction that must be maintained. Śaṃkara draws this conclusion: "How then are we to construe the text, 'That which is *prāṇa* is *vāyu*'? This *vāyu* alone, after attaining the level of (human) self and assuming five transformations, is established as a specific self and is then called *prāṇa*. But it is neither different in essence nor merely *vāyu*."

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[5] At 3.3.16–17, the pūrvapakṣin argues that *Aitareya* 1 clearly indicates Prajāpati as creator of the gods and world; the siddhāntin counters that positing one creator is an easier and more coherent position. But there is still, Vācaspati adds, the possibility that *devatā*s are intermediate guides and creators.

[6] With slight variation, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3.1.5) states, "That which is *prāṇa* is *vāyu*."

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The material realm and the realm of the *devatā*s are neither entirely one nor entirely distinct.

At 3.3.43, a parallel discussion focuses again on the problem of the relationship of *vāyu* and *prāṇa*. Here, verses from the *Chāndogya* equate *vāyu* and *prāṇa*, marking both as the *saṃvarga* (i.e., the place where elements merge): "Indeed, *vāyu* is the *saṃvarga*," (*Chāndogya* 4.3.1) and "Indeed, *prāṇa* is the *saṃvarga*." (*Chāndogya* 4.3.3)[7] Śaṃkara's commentators connect the *adhikaraṇa* back to 2.4.9, though with a distinction appropriate to the agenda of the third *pāda* of the third *adhyāya*, the sorting out and possible consolidation of meditations along with their texts: should the meditations on *vāyu* and *prāṇa* be carried out as one meditation, since they are the same, or should there be two, distinct meditations? Since both are identified with the *saṃvarga*, there would seem to be good reason for unifying the meditations. Here, Śaṃkara explicitly frames the question in regard to how the *adhyātmika* (*prāṇa*) and the *adhidaivata* (*vāyu*) are connected, and how *vāyu* is related to *prāṇa*. He explains that although the two are one in essence (*tattvābheda*), they are distinct in mode of being (*avasthā*). On this basis, they can be meditated on as distinct, despite their underlying identity. More generally, we can infer that the various organs and vital principles are in essence the same as the *devatā*s which are presented as their divine reformulations, but also that in this world they function differently and are to be treated differently.

Śaṃkara takes Bādarāyaṇa's bare reference, "like the *pradāna*" (*pradānavat*) at the end of sūtra 3.3.43, to indicate an analogous situation from Saṃkarṣa's *Devatākāṇḍa*, 2.2.35–36. There, the problem is that there are three offerings to Indra, who is addressed by a different epithet with each offering. Though a case might be made that there can be only one offering, since Indra is one, this is not so; because there are three different ways of naming him, there should also be three offerings. So too, Śaṃkara says, although we can accept that *vāyu* and *prāṇa* are one in essence, this does not prevent there being distinct meditations connected with each. For practical purposes, at least, the *devatā* (*vāyu*) is essentially not different from the vital breath (*prāṇa*), even if they are represented differently and invite different treatment.

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[7] In commenting on these verses in the upaniṣad *bhāṣya*, Śaṃkara makes a simple distinction: *vāyu* marks the external *saṃvarga*, while *prāṇa* marks the more important internal *saṃvarga*.

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Taken together, 2.4.9 and 3.3.43 establish that the divine (*adhidaivata*) is necessarily and usefully distinguished from the material and psychological realities (*adhyātmika*) marked as *prāṇa*. However, it is likewise clear that this usage does not imply any personalization of *devatā* as a conscious and individual deity.

With this background in mind we can turn to the sequel, 2.4.14–16, where the personalization of *devatā* is explicitly stated. The key text is the one we saw cited above, from the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*: "Fire (*agni*) became speech and entered the mouth . . ." (1.2.4) Here the point is that the *prāṇa*s are neither conscious nor functionally independent; therefore, they must be guided by beings who are possessed of consciousness. For the sake of guiding speech, *agni* enters the mouth. Although the human possessors of the organs are conscious, they are not sufficiently knowledgeable to offer this guidance themselves. At this point, Vācaspati considers an objection: although the sense organs are necessarily dependent, they do not necessarily require *devatā*s to guide them. The individual self, as possessor of the organs, might do this; in this case, the reference to *devatā*s would be only metaphorical. In response, Vācaspati argues that there are scriptural texts which clearly assert the role of *devatā*s. Moreover, individual human selves lack that knowledge of differences (*svarūpopayogabhedajñāna*) which is necessary for the guidance of the senses. Amalānanda explains that this knowledge is the foresight by which one can identify a goal, and assess what needs to be done to reach the goal.[8] Vācaspati says that *devatā*s do have the required foresight, for they are able to see immediately with a direct knowledge like that of the ṛṣis (*ārṣa jñāna*). It is therefore best to read the texts in question as conferring the role of guide on *devatā*s, as Śaṃkara concludes: "The fact that *agni* becomes speech and enters the mouth presupposes that the role of supervisor is fulfilled by a *devatā*. If this relation with the *devatā* [as supervisor] were denied, there would be no specific relation of fire with either mouth or speech." As he notes later on (3.1.4), it is only at death that the *devatā*s cease to preside over the sense organs.

But it can still be held that individual selves, and not the *devatā*s, enjoy the fruits of the sense organs. Though agents, *devatā*s cannot be material enjoyers. Connected with the various organs of the body,

[8] He also notes that were one to attribute this guiding role to īśvara and not to the *devatā*s, this would entirely undercut the idea of preserving a role for the individual self.

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many of them live in a single human body and cannot together be the enjoyers of the single set of results that accrue to the human agent. Rather, they must cede the enjoyment of results (along with any misery that derives from results) to the human self (15).[9] So too, *devatā*s are happy by nature, as Śaṃkara says, since "they are established in the position of supreme lordship, and would not stoop to the state of being enjoyers in this inferior body." (16) By contrast, the individual self can be either happy or miserable, and so is liable to good and bad results.[10] It would not be unprecedented to say that although the *devatā* is active, it is the human self which gains the fruit of action: both Vācaspati and Govindānanda observe that the charioteer drives, but it is his passenger who gains the benefit of the action. So too, of course, it is a ritual commonplace to note that while the priests perform a sacrifice, its results accrue to the man who requested its performance.

In 4.3.4–6, the *Chāndogya* description of the self's journey after death is cited: "From the sun to the moon, from the moon to lightning, thus a non-human person makes them go to *brahman*. This is the path of the gods, this is the path of *brahman* . . ." (*Chāndogya* 4.15.5) This prompts a discussion about whether the entities referred along the way—sun, moon, lightning—are merely material entities, or symbols, or indicative of *devatā*s—non-human persons—who are connected with those entities. Since the human self is not capable of guiding itself, and requires some intelligent guidance, the conclusion is that sun, moon, etc., indicate particular *devatā*s who are conscious and identified with the stages of the path. For these *devatā*s are stable (*dhruva*) and are able to negotiate their way through smoke and night in a way the deceased humans cannot. Vācaspati observes that it would not help to assign this guiding role to the Lord, *īśvara*, since by this logic *īśvara's* absolutely universal role would in the end deprive all intermediaries of their functions. It is better to assume that the Lord delegates this guiding role to various *devatā*s.

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[9] At 3.1.7 it is pointed out that *devatā*s "enjoy" people, but do not actually "eat" them.

[10] Another issue seems involved here. One might of course attribute oversight of the organs neither to the self nor to the *devatā*s, and instead to the Lord who ultimately supervises everything. But in that case, the human selves would be neither agents nor enjoyers, and so have no role. In contrast, if the *devatā*s are assigned a supervisory role, the role of enjoyer would be left to the individual soul. It thus turns out that arguing for *devatā* is a way of arguing for a real human role in the governance of human behavior, even if humans cannot be self-sustaining.

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Before moving on to the Vedānta consideration of the ritual role of *devatā*s, let us consider briefly a different angle on the relationship between *devatā* and material reality: do *devatā*s need bodies, some connection with matter, in order to act? Śaṃkara's remarks on this point are minimal and somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, *devatā*s are able to create out of nothing, conjuring realities in the way magicians do (2.1.25, 28); but this point is asserted only in passing, in order to emphasize how much easier it is then to understand that *īśvara* can create without any reliance on a pre-existent material substrate (such as the Sāṃkhya *pradhāna*). On the other hand, at 2.1.31, the pūrvapakṣin asserts that an *īśvara* would not be able to create, since he would lack physical organs; he points to the example of *devatā*s: "Although *devatā*s are conscious and possessed of all powers, they can accomplish their respective tasks only when they are in possession of the physical organs needed for bodily tasks." Although the siddhāntin rejects the conclusion regarding *īśvara*, he does not object to the idea that *devatā*s depend in part on material reality; he merely says that the power of one being (*īśvara*) should not be prejudged by the limits on the power belonging to other beings (*devatā*s). In a moment, we shall see further argumentation, according to the logic of ritual, as to why one must attribute material forms to *devatā*s. For now, we can simply conclude that, the reference to conjuring powers aside, the Vedāntins favor the view that *devatā*s function only in some conjunction with material reality.

Second, *devatās are real, personal beings who interact with humans*. The second main strand behind the Vedānta consideration of *devatā* draws on the context of ritual practice, specifically the understanding of ritual put forward by the Mīmāṃsā theorists. If there is a tendency in the upaniṣads to reduce *devatā*s to material elements or psychological symbols, the Mīmāṃsakas likewise diminished *devatā*s, choosing ultimately to understand them as verbal realities with no active role in sacrifices, which can be understood more neatly without the postulation of divine participation.[11] Although one might expect the Vedāntins to find this diminishment congenial, they go out of their

[11] See Francis X. Clooney, "*Devatādhikaraṇa*: A Theological Debate in the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta Traditions," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 16 (1988), 277–298, and "What's a God? The Quest for the Right Understanding of *devatā* in Brahmaṇical Ritual Theory (*mīmāṃsā*)," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 1 (1997), 337–385.

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way to restore the personality and agency of *devatā*s. There are two key texts which make the Vedānta position clear.

In 1.3.26–33, the question for debate is whether *devatā*s are competent for meditation and for knowledge of *brahman*. The Mīmāṃsakas ruled that *devatā*s are excluded from the performance of rites, since they have no *devatā*s to whom they could offer such rites; one might extend the exclusion to meditation as well. The Vedāntins accept the exclusion from ritual as legitimate, but refuse to extend it to cover the case of meditation, since (in almost all cases) further *devatā*s are not required as objects of meditation. More importantly, *devatā*s are exemplary conscious beings: they are capable of meditation and in need of it; they learn to see the limits of their pleasures and powers, and so desire something more permanent—which can be attained only through knowledge of *brahman*. Even if one holds to the conservative view that knowledge of the *ātman* must be obtained only in the prescribed fashion from the mouth of one's guru, one can suppose that *devatā*s had achieved this knowledge in the proper way, in previous lives.[12]

It suffices to highlight the major conclusions drawn in this long *adhikaraṇa*, which includes several subsidiary discussions. In 1.3.27, it is argued that *devatā*s can be present simultaneously at multiple rites, even if this were to mean that they create multiple forms (*vigraha*) when necessary; we do not see their forms, simply because these forms are invisible. In 1.3.32–33, Śaṃkara follows Bādarāyaṇa in arguing for the necessity of divine forms, so that the *devatā*s can be imaginable and active in ritual. Their connection with heavenly spheres, etc., does not mean that they are symbolized only by the moon and sun, etc., nor that they cannot assume imaginable human forms. Even the spheres have *devatā*s guiding them and ruling over them, and these *devatā*s are conscious beings. According to Śaṃkara, sources of reliable knowledge inform us that *devatā*s are existent, real beings, who can be imagined in the course of ritual and meditation; and even ritual texts provide a basis for postulating imaginable divine forms: "By the injunctions which enjoin certain oblations for the *devatā*s, Indra and the rest, we know that appropriate personal forms are required for Indra and the rest. For they cannot be imprinted on the mind if they lack appropriate personal forms. Nor could an

[12] See Clooney, 1988.

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oblation be offered to a particular *devatā* who could not be implanted in the mind. As it says, 'To whichever *devatā* the oblation is made, let him meditate on that *devatā*, saying *vaṣaṭ*.' (*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 3.8.1) It cannot be said that the proper form of some thing is merely the word referring to it, since the word and the thing are different." (1.3.33) Moreover, authoritative texts and testimonies on yogic powers indicate that there have been people in direct contact with *devatā*s; so their imaginable forms must be presumed to exist, unless there is some persuasive argument to the contrary.

Vācaspati elaborates on Śaṃkara's defense of the idea that *devatā*s must have apprehensible forms. Unless the appropriate form of the *devatā* is inscribed on the mind of the sacrificer, that *devatā* cannot be addressed. The very injunction to offer an oblation to a *devatā* implies the need to imagine its form, since the command, "Invoke the *devatā*" also implies, "Imagine the *devatā*." Although the need to imagine a divine form, based on the injunction, does not prove the existence of such a form, the reference makes sense only if more than words are involved, since words must refer to something. In all of this, of course, the goal is primarily to reaffirm the principle that *brahman* is accessible to all intelligent seekers, *devatā*s included; that humans should seek to know *brahman* is enhanced by the fact that even *devatā*s seek that knowledge.

3.2.38–41 is a discussion of the efficacy of ritual activity: does ritual of itself effect the rewards it promises, or does it depend on the intervention of someone from outside the ritual context? The *adhikaraṇa* aims toward the conclusion that the Lord—*īśvara*, *brahman*—alone is the giver of rewards and punishments, not the *karma* itself or its postulated long-term effect, the *apūrva*. Yet it seems also to leave the door open to a possible retrieval of a role for *devatā*s.

Because the point of the *adhikaraṇa* is to defend the role of the *īśvara* against the Mīmāṃsakas, who had already discarded the idea that the *devatā*s accomplish the fruits of the sacrifices, Śaṃkara does not advert to the possibility that *devatā*s stand as a real alternative source for ritual efficacy. But Vācaspati discusses the role of *devatā*s, proposing a middle position, in which both *īśvara* and *devatā*s might play a part. In his introduction (3.2.38) he emphasizes a Vedānta principle which we have already seen. Beings lacking in consciousness must always be dependent for their activity on conscious beings, so neither the ritual nor its hypothetical result (*apūrva*) can be self-sufficient, but must be guided by a conscious being. Since it is clear

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from reliable sources that *devatā*s are conscious, one might reliably conclude that rituals are efficacious due to the *devatā*s connected with them. The *devatā*s are pleased by sacrifice, and respond by awarding results; similarly, improper rites arouse the opposition of *devatā*s who respond in kind, apportioning punishments to individuals according to their evil intentions. *Devatā*s might thus be afforded a real and important religious role.[13]

Why offer rites to *devatā*s, if ultimately *īśvara* alone is the giver of results? Vācaspati draws another ritual analogy which allows for a complex cooperation of *devatā*s with *īśvara*. In rituals, there is a central primary act which leads to results, but one also performs multiple accessory actions; so too, one can primarily worship *īśvara*, but one can also interact with *devatā*s. Vācaspati observes too that this view is compatible with the "higher" viewpoint by which one would attribute all efficacy only to *brahman*, as cause of all. Due to the force of ignorance, this universal divine efficacy seems to be refracted through the *īśvara* (and *devatā*s) responding to each and every deed, in order to reward or punish.[14] One may also draw a general analogy with how material reality operates: although both material reality and rites are ultimately dependent on *īśvara* alone, in both cases a role is nevertheless preserved for *devatā*s.

Are *devatā*s persons? Although Vedānta does not seek to resolve entirely the ambiguities of its upaniṣadic heritage, its answer is on the whole affirmative. *Devatā*s are conscious, individual, embodied beings who purposefully guide material realities and human beings, and interact responsibly with humans in the course of rituals. As intelligent and active beings, *devatā*s have a role in insuring the intelligibility of the order of material reality, ritual, and the human condition, both before and after death. Though *devatā*s remain secondary, they are understood to help make possible an affirmation of the intelligibility of the world.

We can now state our third observation about *devatā*s: *however importantly devatās function in relation to the material and the ritual, they remain secondary and dependent.* Although the Vedānta construction of the relationship between the material and intelligent affords a real role for *devatā*s, in the end it remains necessary for the Vedāntins to deny

[13] As is pointed out at 2.1.34, the very fact of being a *devatā* or human or animal in the first place has to do with the Lord's recognition of the deeds of each being.
[14] See Clooney 1988.

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primacy to them. We have already seen various constraints placed on the role of *devatā* so as to limit their importance, but this issue is most clearly addressed at 1.1.28–31.

Here the object of discussion is the *Kauśītaki Upaniṣad* 3.1–3, where Indra quite explicitly draws attention to himself as the focus of salvific knowledge.[15] After recollecting his own great deeds as the slayer of the demon Tvastṛ, as the conqueror of the Arurmukhas, etc., Indra goes on to present himself as the supreme object of meditation: "I am *prāṇa*; intelligence itself; meditate on me as long life and immortality . . . whoever meditates on me as long life and immortality reaches long life in this world, and immortality and indestructibility in the heavenly world." (3.1.2) Clearly, Indra presents himself as the object of salvific knowledge, as other texts might present *brahman.* This is plausible, the pūrvapakṣin says, since Indra, like other *devatā*s, has unobstructed knowledge of the inner *ātman.*[16]

The siddhāntin argues that it has already been established (in 1.1.23) that *prāṇa* is to be taken as identical with *brahman*, whenever superlative claims are made about *prāṇa.* It is determined, then, that the claims made by Indra really refer to the *prāṇa*, that is, to *brahman.* Here too, references to Indra's inner self must be understood as references to that supreme self which is the *prāṇa, brahman.* Indra may speak of his self as *the ātman*, but like other *devatā*s he remains external to the *ātman.* That he speaks so boldly is due simply to his realization of unity with the *ātman*; he speaks vividly from this experience—as would a sage who has intuited ultimate reality. But both scripture and reason tell us that Indra cannot be the primary object of meditation, since the focus of salvific knowledge is always *brahman* alone. Indra's boast must therefore be construed as indirect praise for *brahman*; it serves to highlight the value of the knowledge to which even the great Indra is devoted. Indra has a role, but it is always subordinate to *brahman. Devatā*s are real, but secondary religious realities.

Let us summarize what we have learned thus far. Although *devatā*s are of central importance in neither the upaniṣads nor the Vedānta,

[15] At 1.2.17, another reason is given for this secondary status. The reason the "person in the eye" is *brahman* and not merely the sun deity, is that deities are merely external (*parāgrūpa*) to the self. But none of the commentators says anything more about this. It is also pointed out that they cannot be eternal, even if by the Lord's favor they live for a long time and have lordly power.

[16] Amalānanda takes this definition as a reference to the meaning of *śāstradṛṣṭyā* in *sūtra* 1.1.30 and, in commenting on Vācaspati's repetition of Śaṃkara's words, explains, "the approach to direct manifestation that is born of meditation."

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their place is defended and consciously confirmed in the latter. In the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtra Bhāṣya*, Śaṃkara takes up the various strands of the upaniṣadic teaching on *devatā*s and fashions them into a reasonably coherent Vedānta position. *Devatā*s are real, conscious, able to act, individual, personal; they are multiple; like other conscious beings, they are both capable of and in need of salvific knowledge. They are closely linked with cosmic and psychological realities, and provide the intelligible link which helps preserve the integrity and dependence of material realities with respect to *brahman*. They provide the intelligible, directive power which guides material entities in their functioning and finality; as such, they are distinct, but not entirely separable from those material realities. They are also partners to human beings in the ordinary work of religion, and they are even required for the intelligible operation and completion of the transactions comprised by the traditional sacrifices. They are indispensable guides to the human senses during life, and guides for human beings on their post-mortem journey.

In these functions, however, *devatā*s remain totally dependent on *brahman, īśvara*, who alone is the center of faith and the object of salvific knowledge. They are never goals in themselves, and scriptural passages which seem to give them centrality must be reinterpreted in light of the overall requirements of the system. They are important, within set limits. They are granted intelligibility within the Vedānta, and their role in turn helps to make the Vedānta intelligible. Whatever the ultimate status of material beings and human knowers from the perspective of the ultimately real (the *paramārthika*), in the ordinary course of things (the *vyavahārika*) the integrity and distinctive role of humans and things is defended by the Advaita Vedāntins, and *devatā*s are called upon in support of important dimensions of this intelligibility.[17]

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[17] This study has been limited to the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtras Bhāṣya*, a systematic text purposefully designed to highlight and resolve disputed points from a systematic perspective. Let us note what we might learn by attention to the *upaniṣad bhāṣya*s. Although the *bhāṣya*s certainly offer extended expositions of highly important Vedānta topics, none of these focuses on *devatā*s, who are treated in a matter of fact fashion, with the same range of meanings as is found in the upaniṣads themselves. Since these *bhāṣya*s are primarily expository and most of the time remain focused on the words at hand, *devatā*s matter only in context; since the references to them are usually not problematic in context, and since these *bhāṣya*s are not attempting the comprehensive systematic analysis accomplished in the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtra Bhāṣya*, little attention is given to a theory of *devatā*s. Nevertheless, it will be worthwhile to catalogue and analyze the references to *devatā* both in Śaṃkara and his commentators.

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III. Some Generalizations on Mediate Religious Realities in Śaṃkara's Vedānta

As noted at the beginning of this essay, our goal has been not only to understand *devatā*s, but also to understand better the function of the whole range of these intermediate religious realities which stand between the particularities of exegesis and the generalities of *advaita* doctrine. I suggested there that the entire *advaita* system, in its philosophical and exegetical components, can be more integrally understood if one recognizes the role of religious realities such as *devatā*s, material elements, the individual self (*jīva*), the vital force (*prāṇa*), the logic and practice of ritual (*yajña*), the geography of the cosmos and the post-mortem journey, and other secondary religious realities. Let us now return to this broader point.

As is the case with *devatā*s, all these religious realities strengthen the case for taking the *vyavahārika* seriously, fashioning a credible version of the world that is experienced and responded to by the human knowers and agents to whom Vedānta is directed: the world works predictably, it is imbued with intelligibility, and so it can be related to in a practical and fruitful fashion that ultimately leads to a transcendence of it. As attention to religious realities documents the intelligible and manageable character of the world and revitalizes our sense of the *vyavahārika*, it also makes the "truly real," the *paramārthika*, more plausible because more closely connected with the evident, present world. In practice, the *paramārthika* is not simply "radically other" to the present human condition; it is an accessible alternative to a world that has an intelligible, albeit transitory, real structure. In turn, the scriptures offer the key to the intelligibility of the world and the intelligible management of it, and it then becomes more evident why philosophers need to attend to those questions of exegesis by means of which the religious has been rendered significant.

One particularly fruitful sequel to this study of *devatā* will be a reconsideration of the mediate role played by the lord, *īśvara*—the conscious, active Person who is posited as the overall guide of material and spiritual realities—in relation to both *devatā* and *brahman*. Just as *devatā*s are used to make intelligible the order and direction one perceives in material and human realities, *īśvara* can—sometimes, often, but not always—also be understood as yet another intermediate religious reality which (in a privileged fashion) serves to ren-

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der *brahman*'s relation to the world intelligible.[18] On this view, appeals to *īśvara* can be appreciated as useful mediate claims precisely because "the Lord" is in some ways a divine person like the *devatā*s and in some ways simply, purely *brahman*; the word *īśvara* echoes in both directions, and provides a way of speaking both dimensions of reality at once.

Śaṃkara's major task was not so much a totally systematic presentation of Advaita, but rather a cohesive understanding of basic Advaita principles firmly integrated with a faithful reading of the upaniṣads. For him, this entailed serious attention to the mediate religious realities we have been examining and the attribution of a significant function to these realities, *īśvara* and *devatā* included, in rendering a plausible and full account of the intelligibility of the world. While of course this avenue of study must open into a much ampler consideration of the historical, social and religious environment of Śamkara, important initial contributions can be made by the study of realities such as *devatā* and *īśvara* as these function in his written texts.

Finally, attention to these religious realities and their mediate function between the philosophical and exegetical dimensions of Vedānta makes possible a richer kind of comparative study. Like Vedānta, other theologies seek systematic completeness, and they too must find points of intermediate intelligibility by investing importance in elements which are not *the* central elements in the system. These intermediate elements stand between the major philosophical and doctrinal claims which distinguish a particular system on the one hand, and on the other, the details of exegesis with their implied, generalizable pedagogical values. Precisely as limited and derivative, these religious elements stand as manageable focal points at which the larger and smaller values of the entire system can be highlighted with a fair degree of specificity. Focused, mediate comparisons constructed around these religious realities will be necessary supplements to the more usual, large-scale comparisons that are broadly drawn between "God" and "*brahman*;" etc., and they will be substantial complements which render concrete the more formal and methodological studies which

[18] Pertinent here, as a starting point, will be Hacker's observations on the importance of *īśvara* in Śaṃkara's Vedānta, as well as on *īśvara*'s apparent decline in systemic importance in the later Advaita writings. See Hacker, 85–96.

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focus on the exegetical and pedagogical values of the two systems.

I close by introducing just one example of how this intermediate level of comparison might work: *devatā*s can be compared with angels as these are understood in traditional Roman Catholic theology.[19] While it would not be appropriate to equate the respective positions of *devatā*s and angels in the two traditions, nevertheless, there are some obvious point of comparison between the two: both stand above humans and below the highest divine reality; both share the general orientation of reality toward God, both find their fulfillment in the divine; both contribute to the overall functioning and intelligibility of the universe, though God and *brahman* remain primary, free and independent with regard to them.

One approach that might be taken to a comparison of *devatā*s and angels is the following. We have seen that in Vedānta the *devatā*s provide intelligent guidance for human selves during life, with respect to their sense organs, and more generally after death (when humans are no longer in conscious control). In the Roman Catholic theology of Thomas Aquinas, angels share both these functions. First, though two other means of knowledge are available to the disembodied soul,[20] angels are afforded a role in the achievement of knowledge by these souls after death and before the restoration of body at the resurrection. Such souls learn "by seeing separated substances [angels] and grasping the species of things in them. In contrast to the influx of intelligible forms which is the natural and inamissable office of the intelligences, this third mode is dependent on the free will of the angels. This communication is a form of locution, not now of angel with angel but of angel with soul in the order of separated substances . . . The separated soul knows an angel only through the likeness of this latter rather than through its essence. This cognition cannot be perfect, for the mode of existence of the angel surpasses that of the separated soul and permits no natural proportion between faculty and object."[21] Though the terminology and distinctions differ, it seems plausible to suggest that devatās and angels are both conceded significant though limited roles with respect to the intelligibility of the world and the human place in it.

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[19] For this example of angels, I have drawn my observations entirely from James Collins, *The Thomistic Philosophy of Angels* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947).

[20] Ideas acquired before death, and ideas infused directly by God.

[21] Collins, 304.

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Second, following a tradition that goes back to Aristotle, Aquinas concedes to angels influence over heavenly bodies, and by that means, influence over material realities as well; as in Vedānta, this concession of power to secondary beings does not diminish the power of the Lord, but rather serves a convenient and appropriate intermediate role in how the world works intelligibly: "Since it belongs to the divine goodness not only to be pure act but also to be the source of actuality in all other things, His creative intention is that the creature not only be and be good, but also that it be a principle of being and perfection to others. In the plan of the divine wisdom it is therefore ordained that the higher creatures share in the benevolent government of their inferiors . . . Just as the lower separated substances are perfected by the higher in the illuminative influx, so all corporeal things are directed to their proper ends in some way by the angels. Angelic providence is universal, reaching over the entire material universe as the instrument of the divine will. Both the philosophers and the saints agree that all bodies are governed by God through the angels . . ."[22] While in Aquinas the agency of angels is mediated through their ability to influence the heavenly spheres, and while no such specification seems to have been put forward regarding the *devatā*s' guiding role over material realities, nevertheless the general parallel is clear: a higher divine agency is mediated through secondary intelligent beings.

On this basis, of course, there open a set of further questions regarding the derivation and functioning of the power of the *devatā*s and angels. Differences will then become evident, although these may have to do first of all with how *devatā*s and angels were treated in the respective scriptures and theological traditions as structured according to larger patterns of Catholic and Vedānta theology. At this point, other doctrines will come into play and gain a certain sharper focus as seen from this particular perspective: for example, the corresponding but differing accounts of the creation of material and human realities, and the respective accounts of how the cosmos works. But good comparison should always be expected to open into formal and substantive differences as well as similarities, and all of these are instructive. Still larger issues can then come to the fore—for example, broader characterizations of the similarities and differences

[22] Collins, 305.

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between Śaṃkara's Vedānta and Thomas Aquinas' Roman Catholic theology—but it is attention to mediate religious realities such as *devatā*s and angels that may give us the leverage necessary for understanding them.[23]

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[23] Another fruitful comparison between the theologies of *devatā*s and angels might focus on their implications for the philosophical and theological understandings of time and space. In a recent essay, "Angelic Time and Motion," (*The Thomist* 59.4 [1995] 547–575), J. J. MacIntosh has reexamined Thomas Aquinas' understanding of time in relation to his exposition of the nature of angelic beings; above we touched on the debate between the Mīmāṃsakas and Vedāntins regarding whether or not *devatā*s have bodies. Although we did not highlight how that debate uncovers differing Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta understandings of the significance of time and space, this may indeed be an interesting angle to pursue. If so, the Thomistic understanding of angels would then guided lead us to pose a specific new question to the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta traditions.

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THE SELF OF BEING AND THE BEING OF SELF: ŚAṂKARA ON "THAT YOU ARE" (*TAT TVAM ASI*)

Julius J. Lipner

It is a privilege and a pleasure to write this piece in honour of Fr. Richard De Smet, S.J. I first met Richard in 1965. He was my Professor of Logic and Indian thought at the Pontifical Athenaeum (now Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth) at Poona in India. Among other things, he initiated me into Indian philosophy and theology, especially the thought of Śaṃkara. After that we met and corresponded from time to time, and friendship deepened over the years. I have also come to appreciate increasingly the marvellous example and instruction he gave me. As scholars know, De Smet's work is held in great respect in India and abroad ever since he completed his pioneering doctoral thesis, *The Theological Method of Śaṃkara*, in 1953.[1] Yet in a manner of speaking, De Smet has been one of the unsung pioneers of the interpretation of Indian thought, not least in a comparative context. This volume will be a fitting tribute then to his life's labours.

In the shadow of De Smet, I myself have written on occasion on Śaṃkara. I have been especially interested in understanding Śaṃkara's use of religious language. To this end, I have written on Śaṃkara and metaphor, and Śaṃkara's interpretation of that Upanishadic definition of the supreme Reality, *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma* (TaiUp.2.1.1).[2] Here, in a way, I have tried to build on De Smet's pioneering efforts. *Ubi deficiunt equi, trottant aselli.* As will become clear, this essay is the third of a trilogy.

As De Smet notes in his doctoral thesis (p. 268), quoting from Śaṃkara, "The *Vedānta* texts have a twofold purpose: some of them

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[1] Submitted to the Philosophical Faculty of the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

[2] The first, "Śaṃkara on Metaphor with reference to Gītā 13.12–18" in R. W. Perrett (ed.), *Indian Philosophy of Religion*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989, the second, "Śaṃkara on satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma (TaiUp. 2.1.1)" in *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond: Essays in Memory of Bimal K. Matilal*, eds. P. Bilimoria & J. N. Mohanty, OUP, Delhi, 1997.

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aim at teaching the true nature of the highest Self,[3] some at teaching the unity with the highest Self of the Self of knowledge" (*vijñānātman*), viz., the "individual soul" as translated by Thibaut.[4] My essay referring to TaiUp 2.1.1. dealt with the first kind of statement; this essay will deal representatively with the second kind.

In his commentary on Brahmasūtra 3.3.9, Śaṃkara discusses the relationship between the meaning of *Om* and that of *Udgītha* as found in Chāndogya Upanishad 1.1.1, viz.: "One should meditate on the syllable *Om* as the *Udgītha*" (*om ity etad akṣaram udgītham upāsīta*). The *Udgītha* is a part of the *sāman* or melody to which a Vedic verse is sung. In what sense is the sacred syllable *Om* to be meditated upon as the *Udgītha*? asks Śaṃkara. In the guise of an objector or *pūrvapakṣin*, he distinguishes four possible relationships between the two terms: (i) *adhyāsa* or "superimposition." This occurs when the idea of one thing, e.g., god Vishnu, is foisted as it were on something completely different, that is, is related to the idea of something quite different, e.g., an image of Vishnu. The two ideas are held in conjunction, but *on the basis of the realised difference of their referents*. (ii) *apavāda* or "negation." Here the right idea drives out a false one thus dispelling a confusion. For example, says, Śaṃkara, *apavāda* occurs when we realize that the true self is not to be conflated with body, senses etc., viz., the empirical self. The idea of the true self drives out the false idea of self. (iii) *ekatva* or "identity." The terms *brāhmaṇa*, i.e., "Brahmin," and "the best of the twice-born" (*dvijottama*) are related in this way, for they are co-extensive: Brahmins *are* the best of the twice-born. Finally, (iv) *viśeṣaṇa* or "specification." One may say that A is B on the understanding that one term *specifies* or *delimits* the other. Thus one may refer to the whole by the part (or *vice versa*): one may properly say, "The village is on fire" when only a few huts are burning, or "The cloth is burnt" when only a portion of the cloth is burnt. Śaṃkara adopts the fourth relationship, that of specification, as the correct one in interpreting the Chāndogya passage. The passage should then be understood as follows: "Here one

[3] In an aside De Smet remarks that these are the "definitions—*lakṣaṇas*."

[4] I.e., the conscious, individual self. *dvirūpā hi vedāntavākyānāṃ pravṛttiḥ, kvacit paramātmasvarūpanirūpaṇaparā kvacit vijñānātmanaḥ paramātmaikatvopadeśaparā*. Śaṃkara's *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (abbr. BSB) 1.3.25. Quotations from this text are taken from *Brahmasūtraśāṃkarabhāṣyam*, ed. by Ramchandra Shastri Dhupakar & Mahadeva Shastri Bakre (abbr. D&B), publ. by Tukaram Javaji, Bombay, 1904. Unless stated otherwise all translations are by the author of this article.

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should meditate on the syllable *Om* in relation not to the Veda as a whole, but to a part of it, viz., the *Udgītha*, that is, as delimited or qualified by the *Udgītha*. In other words, one should meditate on the syllable *Om* as it bears on the *Udgītha*."

The objector says that on this interpretation *lakṣaṇā* or oblique predication applies, for the whole (the *Om*) is being represented by the part (the *Udgītha*). This seemingly is not a good thing hermeneutically, for according to the rules of Vedic exegesis it is incumbent on one to seek first to interpret a text according to its literal or primary or "face-value" meaning (*mukhyārtha* in Sanskrit); only if this is shown to be inappropriate can one resort to secondary or figurative meanings (*lakṣaṇā*). But to take the part for the whole (or *vice versa*) is to give a figurative interpretation of the text. It is at this point that Śaṃkara makes a crucial statement. With reference to the issue raised, there are two kinds of *lakṣaṇā* or figurative/oblique predication,[5] he says in effect. To use his own words: "With respect to *lakṣaṇā*, there are proximity and remoteness (of the assumed meaning of a word in relation to its primary meaning). In the case of the superimposition, because cognition of one object is applied to something quite different, the *lakṣaṇā* is remote. But in the case of the specification, because the whole is understood by a word expressing a part, the *lakṣaṇā* is proximate."[6] So when one superimposes cognition of Vishnu on an image of Vishnu, since Vishnu and his image are in reality two quite different things, the primary sense of "Vishnu" does not apply to the image; the primary sense of "Vishnu" and the assumed sense (as applied to the image in, e.g., "Look! There's Vishnu in the shrine") are "far apart" (*viprakṛṣṭau*), and this is an instance of figurative predication that is *metaphorical*. It is metaphorical rather than erroneous, because one *knows* that the image is not really Vishnu.[7]

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[5] The term *lakṣaṇā* can stand for "figurative/implied meaning" or "figurative implied application of meaning, i.e., predication."

[6] *lakṣaṇāyām api tu saṃnikarṣaviprakarṣau bhavata eva. adhyāsapakṣe hy arthāntarabuddhir arthāntare nikṣipyata iti viprakṛṣṭā lakṣaṇā viśeṣaṇapakṣe tv avayavivacanena śabdenāvayavaḥ samarpyata iti saṃnikṛṣṭā*. (*samudāyeṣu hi pravṛttaḥ śabdā avayaveṣv api vartamānā dṛṣṭāḥ paṭagrāmādiṣu*); D&B, p. 688.

[7] The article "Śaṃkara on Metaphor" mentioned above goes into this difference at length. Under BSB 4.1.6, a similar description of *lakṣaṇā* is given. Here Śaṃkara, in glossing CUp.1.6.1 ("This earth is the hymn (*ṛk*) indeed, fire is the melody (*sāman*). So the melody is placed upon this hymn": *iyam evarg agniḥ sāma tad etad etasyām ṛcy adhyūḍhaṃ sāma*), says: "The use of the terms 'hymn' and 'melody' of earth and fire respectively are figurative. And figurative predication, depending on the circumstances, applies according as the relation of the word's proper (i.e., literal) sense

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But taking the whole for the part or the part for the whole is a case of figurative predication that is also literal in so far as the referents concerned are not two separate things. On the contrary, since the two referents share the same reality, the primary and assumed meanings of the terms applied overlap as to their literal meaning (e.g., "(part of the) cloth/(the whole) cloth": "part of the (village/(the whole) village"); in Śaṃkara's language, they are "proximate" (*saṃnikṛṣṭau*). De Smet has argued that in the language of the medieval Schoolmen of Europe, the second kind of figurative predication is an instance of intrinsic analogy (we may add that the first kind is an instance of extrinsic analogy).[8] "Extrinsic" since there is no direct overlap between the primary and assumed meanings of the relevant terms, and "intrinsic" since there is overlap of the core-meanings of the applied terms. Both are instances of figurative or oblique predication since the expressions in question are not taken naively at face-value: when we say, "Look! There's Vishnu in the shrine" we know that the image is not Vishnu, and when we say, "The village is on fire" we know that only part of the village is burning. Yet "proximate" *lakṣaṇā* or oblique predication is *also* a form of literal predication (though not *naive* literal predication) in so far as the assumed meaning and the proper meaning of the term(s) applied e.g., "cloth," "village," overlap literally, that is, share the same literal meaning.

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is either remote from or proximate to (the assumed meaning)": *lākṣaṇika eva pṛthivyagnyor ṛksāmaśabdaprayogaḥ. lakṣaṇā ca yathāsaṃbhavaṃ saṃnikṛṣṭena viprakṛṣṭena vā svārthasaṃbandhena pravartate.* D&B, p. 840. In other words, because "earth" and "fire" are used in senses (as applied to "hymn" and "melody") so far removed from their literal or proper meanings (*svārtha*), the *lakṣaṇā* here is "remote". This remote *lakṣaṇā* is metaphorical because one knows that earth and fire are really not hymn and melody respectively.

[8] See, e.g., his (i) "Origin: Creation and Emanation" in *Indian Theological Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 3, Sept. 1978, p. 267: "Of the three chief types of *lakshaṇā*, the one directly useful to the metaphysician is the *jahad-ajahal-lakshaṇā* [= Śaṃkara's "proximate" *lakṣaṇā*] which corresponds closely to the *intrinsic analogy* of the Christian Schoolmen which itself originates in Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius"; (ii) "The Correct Interpretation of the Definitions of the Absolute, according to Śaṃkarācārya and Saint Thomas Aquinas" (abbr. CIDA), in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, Jan. 1995: "Both Śrī Śaṃkara . . . and St. Thomas Aquinas . . . have relied principally upon a specific element of the theories of the various meanings of words which they inherited from their respective cultures, i.e., *lakṣaṇājñāna* in Indian culture and *knowledge through analogy* in Greco-Christian culture" (p. 187). On p. 193, he identifies the two. Indeed, one of De Smet's distinctive pioneering contributions to comparative philosophical theology between Hindu and Christian thought is in the area of *lakṣaṇā*/analogy.

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We have clarified, I hope, a central distinction with regard to oblique predication (*lakṣaṇā*) in Śaṃkara's interpretation of scripture, viz., that oblique predication can be extrinsic or intrinsic, "remote" or "proximate" (to use Śaṃkara's terminology). We can now turn to his understanding of those scriptural texts that teach our relationship with the supreme Being, as represented by the Upanishadic statement *tat tvam asi*: generally translated as "That you are." In due course we shall have occasion to apply this distinction to his interpretation of this statement.

The context of this great declaration (*mahāvākya*) is well known. It is also taken from the Chāndogya Upanishad. There (6.1.4–6.16.3) the story is told of the sage Uddālaka Āruṇi giving his son, Śvetaketu, religious teaching. Śvetaketu has returned from a long discipleship (*brahmacarya*) with a teacher, swollen-headed and over-confident. When he realises, at his father's questioning, that his teaching has not gone deep enough, he asks for proper instruction. The teaching which is the climax of the instruction, given through a series of examples, is usually translated to this effect: "That which is this subtle One, which all this has for its Self, is the Real. That is the Self. That you are, Śvetaketu" (*sa ya eṣo'ṇimaitadātmyam idaṃ sarvaṃ tat satyaṃ sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo*).[9] Granting that this translation conveys the correct

[9] See J. P. Brereton's important essay, "*Tat Tvam Asi*" in Context' (abbr. TTA; Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Vol. 136, No. 1, 1986), for an analysis of the syntactical impropriety of translating *tat tvam asi* as "That you are." "If the meaning were 'you are that (finest essence),' then we would expect not *tat tvam asi* but *sa tvam asi*. The *ta-* pronoun ought to be masculine, not neuter." Brereton makes a plausible case for translating the *tat tvam asi* refrain, in context, as: "That which is this finest essence, that the whole world has as its self. That is the truth. That is the self. In that way [= thus] are you, Śvetaketu" (p. 109). But as J. Brockington has pointed out in private communication to me, "the *tat* may be construed as following in gender from *idaṃ sarvam* a little earlier." Nevertheless, Brereton concedes that the philosophical import of the passage may be represented by the translation, "That you are," where *tat* as "that" would refer to the supreme Being (*sat*/*satyam*) mentioned, and this, in fact, is how most Vedāntin theologians have construed the refrain. The nature of the precise philosophical/theological relationship between *tat* so construed and *tvam* ("you") is a further question, and it is Śaṃkara's interpretation of this relationship which will concern us in this essay.

Further, I am not at all convinced by P. Hacker's declaration that in the Upanishad *satyam* should be translated as "truth" rather than as "the Real" on the grounds that "Uddālaka's thought had not yet reached the degree of abstraction that is contained in this term", i.e. "the Real"; see *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*, ed. by W. Halbfass, SUNY Press, Albany, 1995, pp. 275–276. Hacker is attacking Deussen here, but he himself says that Uddālaka "is teaching his son Śvetaketu about Being (*sat*) . . . the essence of the universe" (ibid.). Such teaching seems to imply a fair degree of abstraction, and it is not clear to

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philosophical/theological import of the text, then obviously the declaration "That you are, Śvetaketu" is the crucial statement linking the individual with the supreme Reality. But what sort of affirmation is this? What kind of unity or identity is it implying? For that the declaration, as theologically unitive, is an instance of implication of some sort, of oblique predication, is equally obvious. It cannot be taken naively at face-value: the swollen-headed, rather ignorant youth cannot *be* the subtle essence of the world in any simplistic sense. Let us now examine Śaṃkara's understanding of those scriptural statements which he interprets as uniting the individual and the supreme Being, as exemplified by the declaration, That (*tat*) you (*tvam*) are (*asi*).

The most revealing exegesis is given in chapter 18 of Śaṃkara's work, *A Thousand Teachings* (*Upadeśasāhasrī*; abbr. US),[10] though we shall also have to consult Śaṃkara's commentary on the Chāndogya Upanishad among other writings.[11] In this way, in the context of a thinker whose main literary approach was commentarial and hence perforce disjointed rather than procedurally systematic,[12] we shall be able to piece together a more or less coherent account of his view. Chapter 18 of the verse section of the US is by far the longest chapter of that section, and is quite self-contained, thus indicating the importance of the topic for the author. There is a propaedeutic discussion about the relationship between the supreme Self and the

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me how it falls short precisely of that "degree of abstraction" that teaching about "the Real" is supposed to contain. This is mere assertion. In any case, Hacker agrees that "In later Vedānta philosophy [*satya*] has been understood as meaning that Being, or the Self, is that which truly is, or the only reality" (ibid.), and this is the context in which we are working.

[10] This work consists of a prose and a verse section. Some scholars are of the opinion that the prose section may be by a hand other than Śaṃkara's. It is generally agreed, however, that the verse section is by Śaṃkara. We are concerned especially with chapter 18 of this section. There are a number of editions of the US. See, e.g.: (i) *Upadeśa Sāhasrī: A Thousand Teachings in Two Parts—Prose and Poetry of Śaṅkarācārya*, by Swami Jagadananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1970; (ii) *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṅkara*, by S. Mayeda (this is a translation with Introduction and Notes), University of Tokyo Press, 1979; Mayeda has produced an edition of the text in *Śaṅkara's Upadeśasāhasrī, Critically Edited with Introduction and Indices*, The Hokuseido Press, Tokyo, 1973; (iii) *The Thousand Teachings of Śaṃkara*, trans. by A. J. Alston, Shanti Sadan, 1990. These scholars assume that the whole text is by Śaṃkara. Sanskrit references to the US follow Alston's text; the translation and interpretation of the Sanskrit are, of course, my own.

[11] The Sanskrit of Śaṃkara's commentaries on the Upanishads is taken from *Ten Principal Upanishads with Śāṅkarabhāṣya* (abbr. TPU), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1964.

[12] Though a systematic philosophical theology can be derived from Śaṃkara's thought.

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individual self in terms of their distinctive natures, the repudiation of opposing views, and then the meaning of the *mahāvākya* is given. The verse text is involved, complex, and difficult to interpret. So it will be a help, I think, to begin our analysis by noting some remarks from Śaṃkara's commentary on the Chāndogya Upanishad, the source of the great declaration. This first appears under CUp.6.8.7.[13]

Śaṃkara construes as follows:

> That . . . subtle existent . . . is the Root of the world. . . . This (world) has this Being as its Self. . . . This world has no other Self, such as a transmigrating self. . . . And that Self by which this whole world is Self-endowed, that, called Being, is the (world's) Cause, the Real, existing as the supreme Being. Therefore, that Self (*ātmā*) is the true nature of the world . . . its Reality. For when the word *ātmā* appears without any qualifying term it applies directly to the inner self (the *pratyagātman*), just as the words "cow" etc. (apply directly to the cow-reality etc. when they are not qualified further by adjectivals such as "white," "broken-horned" etc.). Therefore, the text means "O Śvetaketu, *you are that*, i.e., Being (which is the ensouling Self of the world)". . . .[14]

We have made some progress. We know, at least, the meaning of *tat*, "that" in the declaration (according to Śaṃkara). *Tat* refers to Being/the Real (*sat*), the supreme Being (*paramārtha*), the true nature (*pratyaksvarūpa*), the inner reality (*yāthātmya*), the causal, ensouling Self (*pratyagātman*) of the world. According to Śaṃkara, no further semantic engineering is required upon this word—its meaning is clear enough—and nowhere else in his various comments on the term does he indicate that *tat* on its own must be subjected to special hermeneutic surgery. I hope to confirm this interpretation, contrary to other construals of Śaṃkara's view, in due course.

But the problem still remains. In what sense is fallible Śvetaketu, the direct referent of *tvam*, and representing each of us as individuals,

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[13] Brereton has argued (TTA, pp. 104f.) that the original locus of the declaration is CUp.6.12.

[14] *sa . . . aṇubhāvo jagato mūlam . . . etat sad ātmā . . . sarvasya . . . nānyo'asty asyātmā saṃsārī . . . yena cātmanātmavat sarvam idaṃ jagat tad eva sadākhyaṃ kāraṇaṃ satyaṃ paramārthasat. ataḥ sa evātmā jagataḥ pratyaksvarūpaṃ . . . yāthātmyam. ātmaśabdasya nirupapadasya pratyagātmani gavādiśabdavan nirūḍhatvāt. atas tat sat tvam asīti he śvetaketo.* CUp.6.8.7; TPU, pp. 527–8. Brereton notes that Śaṃkara "interprets the *ta-* and *eta-* pronouns as referring to 'Being' (*sat*) in one way or another. . . . Philosophically he may be completely justified. . . . But syntactically . . . all the demonstrative pronouns [in the Upanishadic text], except for the last, refer not to *sat*, but to *aṇiman-*. That last pronoun cannot. The effect of the commentator's strategy is to gloss over this change" (TTA, p. 103).

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tat, the supreme ensouling Self of the world? In verses 18.195 and 18.196 of the US, it is said: "In the statement 'That you are,' the meaning of the two words 'that' and 'are' is known. . . . The word 'are' shows that both 'that' and 'you' bear jointly on the same referent (*tulyanīḍārtha*)."[15] If the meaning of "*tat*/that" is known, then, as I have averred earlier, there is no need to look for oblique senses in it; it refers plainly to the supreme Being. Similarly, the copula "*asi*/are" affirms a real identity: its function is to make both "that" and "you" bear on the same referent. Śaṃkara's commentary on CUp 6.16.3. clarifies this. There the objector argues in effect that the copula posits an *ascriptive identity*, not a real identity.

"Is it not the case," he contends, "that in the statement 'That you are,' a *sadbuddhi* [i.e., an ascriptive identity of the form 'Think that so and so is such'] is prescribed with respect to the object expressed by the term 'you,' as when we superimpose the idea of Brahman etc., on such things as the sun and mind,[16] or as when we superimpose Vishnu on his images."[17] In other words, "You, Śvetaketu, are to think that you are Brahman, though in fact you are not." Note that the same example is used here to indicate the relationship between the real object and the supposed object as in the extract above explaining the occurrence of remote *lakṣaṇā*, i.e., the example of Vishnu and his image as identified through the relationship of superimposition (*adhyāsa*). Just as the assumed meaning of the term "Vishnu" is far removed from the real meaning, so here too, it is argued, the assumed meaning of *tvam* (viz., the supreme Being) is far removed from the real meaning (poor little Śvetaketu). There is no identity implied, only superimposition.

No, replies Śaṃkara: when s*adbuddhi* occurs, the particle *iti*, "as," intervenes in the sense "Think of so and so *as* such." Here there is no *iti*; so the function of the copula is to affirm a real identity: "That you *are*, Śvetaketu."[18]

Well, persists the objector, it *is* a case of remote *lakṣaṇā*, as when we say of someone, "You *are* a lion, endowed with the qualities of

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[15] *vākye tattvamasīty asmiñ jñātārthaṃ tadasidvayam . . . tattvamos tulyanīḍārtham asīty etatpadaṃ bhavet.*

[16] viz., "Consider the sun/the mind to be Brahman."

[17] *nanu tat tvam asīty atra tvamśabdavācye'rthe sadbuddhir ādiśyate yathādityamana-ādiṣu brahmādibuddhiḥ. yathā ca loke pratimādiṣu viṣnvādibuddhis tadvat*; TPU, p. 539.

[18] *na. ādityādivākyavailakṣaṇyāt. ādityo brahmetyādau iti śabdavyavadhānān na sākṣād brahmatvaṃ gamyate . . . iha tu . . . (tat tvam asīti) . . . niraṅkuśaṃ sadātmabhāvam upadiśati*; TPU, pp. 539–540.

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valour and the like."[19] Just as the warrior is not really a lion (but can quite properly be called a lion in the right circumstances), so Śvetaketu is not really "That," i.e., the supreme Being. No again, says Śaṃkara, for the text teaches that there is only one Being, without a second (so in this context, it is intended to teach that Śvetaketu *is* the supreme Being). In any case, why should the text wish to identify Śvetaketu with this Being (by way of remote *lakṣaṇā*, or extrinsic analogy)? To praise one or the other, it might be answered. No, responds Śaṃkara. Śvetaketu is not worthy of praise! (whereas the warrior on the battlefield might well be). Nor is the supreme Being praised in such a teaching, for "You can't praise a king by identifying him with his servant!"[20] So, Śaṃkara would conclude, the copula *asi* affirms a real identity.

After this clarification, we come back to our question: what does *tvam*/you mean in the declaration? We know what *tat* means, and we know the function of *asi*/are, viz., to assert a real identity. We must now inquire into the meaning of *tvam*; this is the key to Śaṃkara's interpretation of the whole statement. As he says (in the latter half of US.18.195): "If the meaning of *tvam* is not known, then for lack of (cognitive) assistance the declaration will not produce sound knowledge."[21] So the meaning of *tvam* is crucial.

Tvam ordinarily means "you." Semantically, if not linguistically, it is functionally equivalent to *aham* which means "I." That is, both terms refer to the individual, the former in the second person, the latter in the first person. So it is not surprising that Śaṃkara takes care in the US to interpret the meaning of *aham*, as occurring in such texts as BAUp. 1.4.10; *ahaṃ brahmāsmi*: "I am Brahman."[22] Semantically, "I am Brahman" is to be understood on an equivalent basis to "That you are." If one grasps what *aham*/I means in the former declaration, one will understand the meaning of *tvam*/you

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[19] The chief example discussed in my article "Śaṃkara on Metaphor."

[20] *nanu parākramādiguṇaḥ siṃho'si tvam itivat tat tvam asīti syāt. na. mṛdādivat sad ekam evādvitīyaṃ satyam ity upadeśāt . . . nāpi stutir anupāsytvāt śvetaketoḥ. nāpi sat śvetaketutvopadeśena stūyeta. na hi rājā dāsas tvam ity stutyaḥ syāt*; TPU, p. 540.

[21] *tvamarthe'saty asāhāyyād vākyaṃ notpādayet pramām.*

[22] As the Upanishad intimates, Brahman, the supreme Being, is the primary analogue of "I" in this statement; that is, Brahman, *par excellence*, knows itself for what It is—the one underlying substrate of all. But, as the Upanishad goes on to state, "Whoever [among the gods, sages or humans] knows thus, 'I am Brahman,' becomes all this (*ya evaṃ veda ahaṃ brahmāsmīti sa idaṃ sarvaṃ bhavati*)." These other enlightened beings are—from their point of view—secondary analogues, achieving enlightenment by virtue of Brahman's self-knowledge within them.

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in the latter. Śaṃkara declares (US. 18.101): "The (denotative) terminus (*niṣṭhā*) of the word 'I' is in the luminous inner Self (*pratyagātman*); that same terminus has been stated in 'You are the (supreme) Being' (as deriving from 'That you are'). The fruit then of these statements is the liberated state."[23] And what is the nature of the *pratyagātman* or inner Self which both *aham* and *twam* are intended to denote? Śaṃkara has already given a desciption (US. 18.26): "Awareness, self-luminous, Seeing truly, ever actionless, the direct Witness within everything, the conscious One, eternal, without attributes, nondual."[24]

But there is a puzzle here. Do not *aham* and *twam* refer to the ordinary individual, e.g., Śvetaketu? How does Śaṃkara arrive at the extraordinary sense given above? The truth is, argues Śaṃkara, that *aham/twam* refers simultaneously to both the empirical self *and* the inner Self in its everyday function. It has a double referent; to use Śaṃkara's terminology, a double denotative terminus (*niṣṭhā*). People not enlightened by Vedantic insight catch on to only the conventional, empirical referent—the *abhimāna* or ego. But this ego, only seemingly conscious, is as if a reflection of the underlying conscious (= self-luminous) Self—like the reflection of a face in a mirror. Unenlightened, we take the reflection for the reality.[25]

We can give the argument by stringing together excerpts from the US:

> Always in close proximity to (the inner, pure Self), the ego (= empirical self) is a reflection of the former whence ensues the two spheres

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[23] *ahaṃśabdasya niṣṭhā yā jyotiṣi pratyagātmani, saivoktā "sad asīty" evaṃ phalaṃ tatra vimuktatā*. Or again (18.181): "In declarations such as 'That you are,' the meaning of the word 'you' is not clearly expressed, so we do not understand that the declaration means 'I am always liberated'": *tat twam asyādivākyeṣu twampadārthāvivekataḥ vyajyate naiva vākyārtho nityamukto' ham ity ataḥ*. Note here again, only the sense of *twam* is to be discerned.

[24] *upalabdhiḥ svayaṃjyotir dṛśiḥ pratyak sadā'kriyaḥ, sākṣāt sarvāntaraḥ sākṣī cetā nityo'guṇo'dvayaḥ*.

[25] In Vedantic philosophical anthropology, the empirical self or ego (*abhimāna, ahaṃkāra*) is constituted from *Prakṛti*, non-conscious in nature and the matrix of all change, of space and of time (viz., temporal and spatial extension). For the unenlightened, *Prakṛti* is conflated and ever associated with *Puruṣa/Ātman*, whose nature is unchanging, pure consciousness (and bliss). One way that this conflation is precipitated in everyday experience is in the form of the human individual, perceived as a composite of spirit and matter, i.e., embodied consciousness. For all Vedāntins, though this is explained differently in the different schools, one's spiritual goal is to distinguish between the spheres of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, not least in the human individual, and to realise that the "true self" and its destiny is *Puruṣaic* not *Prakritic*.

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> of "Self" and "pertaining to Self," viz., of the "I" and the "mine" (18.27). . . . The ideas of "mine" and "this (other thing)" must be realised as pertaining to the non-Self, whereas the idea of "I" represents the realm of the "Self"; and the awareness "I am such" pertains to both realms (18.91). . . . From teachings such as "That you are" coupled with reasoning, the attributes of the non-Self get removed from the evident Self denoted by the word/awareness "I," just as we realise that (something appearing as) a snake is really a rope (18.4).[26]

So ordinarily *aham*/I or *tvam*/you refer to *both* the empirical self and the inner Self (the one non-dual Brahman or ensouling Self of all). The unenlightened person understands only the empirical self as the referent of the personal pronoun. This empirical self is describable as "I am so and so," viz., "I am tall/short/dark/fair/male/female" etc. etc. But this is only part of the denotation of *aham*/*tvam*, and it is not even the chief part. It is as it were the shadow part, the part taken on sufferance in so far as it is a reflection of, an existence borrowed from, the highest referent of *aham*/*tvam*, viz., the inner, luminous Self (the *pratyagātman*). To understand Upanishadic teachings such as "That you are" and "I am Brahman" aright, the empirical meaning of *tvam*/*aham* must be emptied out from the content of the personal pronouns, and the transcendental meaning—the non-dual, luminous Self—must be retained. The purified statement then becomes an affirmation of identity of the form: "The inner, luminous I *is* Brahman, the supreme Reality" (= *ahaṃ brahmāsmi*); "Your inner, luminous Self, Śvetaketu is That, the supreme Being, the ensouling Self of the world" (= *tat tvam asi*). The teaching understood in this way is unobjectionable; it endorses Advaita. When such a teaching is *realised*—through contemplation, repetition, the living of a virtuous life under the guidance of a teacher—rather than merely understood intellectually, liberation results. This is Śaṃkara's interpretation.

Note the following: (i) This construal of *tat tvam asi*/*ahaṃ brahmāsmi* is an instance of "proximate" *lakṣaṇā* or oblique predication in Śaṃkara's terminology (= intrinsic analogy), for the assumed meaning of *tvam*/*aham* retains a part of the literal sense (*svārtha*) of the personal pronoun(s), viz., "the *pratyagātman* or inner Self." *Aham*/*tvam* refer properly to *both* the empirical self and the inner Self. To understand

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[26] *sannidhau sarvadā tasya syāt tadābho'bhimānakṛt, ātmātmīyaṃ dvayaṃ cātaḥ syād aham-mamagocaraḥ (27) . . . mamedampratyayau jñeyau yuṣmady eva na saṃśayaḥ aham ity asmadīṣṭaḥ syād ayam asmīti cobhayoḥ (91) . . . siddhād evāham ity asmād yuṣmaddharmo niṣidhyate, rajjvām ivāhidhīr yuktyā tat tvam ityādiśāsanaiḥ. (4).*

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the Upanishadic dicta aright, one must drop only the connotation of the empirical self; reference to the transcendental Self is retained—and this is part of the literal meaning of the pronoun(s). Since the personal pronouns continue to be taken literally, albeit in a purified sense, the Vedic exegetical rule, "Presume to first interpret literally unless forced to do othewise" is not violated. Thus we can understand the following statement of Śaṃkara: "By using the word 'you' to mean [one] devoid of suffering, it has the sense of the word 'that'; the sense of the words, 'that' (and 'you') combined thus refer to the inner Self (18.171). . . . Without giving up their proper meaning (*svārtha*), both words yield a special sense resulting in the knowledge of the inner self. . . . (18.173)."[27]

Thus, "you" as referring to the empirical self—the agent of suffering in the world—is to be dropped; what remains is "you" as connoting the inner Self, not subject to, viz., devoid of, suffering. With this purified sense of "you," "that" and "you" in combination refer to the same thing—the inner, luminous Self—without abandoning a core of their proper, i.e., literal, meaning (*svārtha*). Thus the declaration can be understood literally, if not simplistically.

(ii) I think that I have shown, by more than one reference to Śaṃkara's usage, that where specific words of the declaration are concerned, only *tvam*/you is to be understood in an excised, though still literal, sense, viz., as dropping its empirical connotation of "suffering, agent self." *Tat*/that does not require such semantic surgery; its meaning, as referring to the ensouling, luminous Self of all, is plain. Thus I venture to disagree with J. A. B. van Buitenen, S. Mayeda and indeed De Smet in their interpretation of *tat*.

In his edition of Rāmānuja's *Vedārthasaṃgraha*,[28] van Buitenen translates US.18.197 as follows: "The word *tat* has the meaning of interior self, the word *tvam* has the meaning of the word, *tat*; both words drop part of their meaning, *tvam* that of the empirical ego, *tat* that of the non-self" (p. 63). Mayeda (in whose text this is vr. 195) translates somewhat tortuously: "The two [words] will remove [the notions] that [the word 'Thou' (= the inner *Ātman*) means] a sufferer of pain and that [the word 'That' (= *Brahman*) means] non-inner *Ātman*. And thus [the two words] will mutually convey the meaning of [the sen-

[27] *nirduḥkhavācinā yogāt tvaṃśabdasya tadarthatā, pratyagātmābhidhānena taccabdasy yutes tathā . . . svārthasya hy aprahāṇena viśiṣṭārthasamarpakau, pratyagātmavāgatyantau. . . .*

[28] Deccan College Monograph Series vol. 16, Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Poona, 1956.

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tence] 'Not thus! Not so!'" This is clarified somewhat on p. 53 of the same volume: "The word 'Thou' ordinarily means 'a sufferer of pain'. . . . This is the meaning absent (*vyatireka*) in, or incompatible with, the word 'That.' Therefore, this meaning is excluded . . . or removed . . . from the word 'Thou.' Further, the word 'That' may mean here 'something other than the inner *Ātman*'. . . but this meaning is absent (*vyatireka*) in, or incompatible with, the word 'Thou.' For this reason the meaning 'something other than the inner Ātman' must be removed from the word 'That.'" Thus for Mayeda, as for van Buitenen, both *tat* and *tvam* are supposed to drop part of their meaning. De Smet does not translate this verse, but he also assumes that *tat* has an oblique meaning: "the *paramārtha* [final sense] of *tat* as pointed out (*lakṣya*) by the context, is therefore: 'the absolute root-cause of this manifold universe' or simply, 'the *Brahman*.' Similarly, the context forbids us to understand the term *tvam* in its primary sense . . ."[29]

The Sanskrit of the verse in question is as follows:

> *tacchabdaḥ pratyagātmārthas tacchabdārthas tvamas tathā*
> *duḥkhitvāpratyagātmatvaṃ vārayetām ubhāv api.*

Neither contextually, nor indeed linguistically, may this be translated to mean that both *tat* and *tvam* drop part of their meanings. The critical expression is *duḥkhitvāpratyagātmatvaṃ vārayetām ubhau.* The dual here (*vārayetām ubhau*) means that the *combined* meaning of *tat* and *tvam* is such as to elide the meaning of "suffering self," viz., the empirical self (*duḥkhī*) *which is not the inner Self* (*pratyagātman*). In other words, the final meaning yielded is a combined meaning resulting in the elision of the empirical self or that self which is not the pure, luminous inner Self. This is different from saying that *tat* is to be understood in an elided sense in the way *tvam* is. Śaṃkara gains by this interpretation. It is the gain of hermeneutic economy. One should perform as little semantic surgery on the text as possible. In this way one shows the text the greatest possible respect. So verse 18.197/195 should be translated to this effect:

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[29] See CIDA, p. 190. Mayeda and De Smet just seem to have followed van Buitenen in this interpretation, the earliest of the three texts and referred to in one context or other by both of them. As part of the chain it seems, Alston (who mentions Mayeda with general approval) also follows this interpretation. In a note he says: "The idea of the sufferer" is excluded from "thou," the idea of "not being the inmost self from 'that'" (op. cit., p. 375).

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"The word 'that' has the inner Self for its referent/designates the inner Self; 'you' has the sense of the word 'that'/has the same referent as the word 'that.' Both words (jointly exclude) the condition of the non-inner Self, which is the condition of the suffering self."[30]

(iii) From this it follows that the two pronouns of the declaration have a combined excluding function, not really a positive describing function. That is, by jointly designating the luminous inner Self, they indicate most appropriately what Śvetaketu ultimately is not, viz., the empirical self, rather than what ultimately he is. As mentioned before, it is the empirical self which is most appropriately describable by conventional language: "I am so and so." The inner Self, the supreme Brahman, from which words turn back (TaiUp. 2.9.1) cannot straightforwardly be described by everyday words; it can most appropriately only be indicated (*lakṣya*). So Śaṃkara says:

> Because it is the empirical self (*ahaṃkṛt*) which possesses generic characteristics, action etc., words apply to it; no word applies to the Self proper, because it does not have (these attributes) [18.28]. Only where there is a reflection of this Self [i.e., the empirical self] do words stand; they (only) indicate (*lakṣayeyuḥ*) the inner Seer—they can in no wise straightforwardly designate it [18.29]. For something without generic characteristics etc., cannot be described by words [18.30]. . . . All [attributes] such as agency etc., ascribed to the [inner] Self, [which is pure] Consciousness, by the empirical self, are to be rejected as "Not so, not so" [as taught, e.g., by BAUp. 2.3.6] together with the empirical self itself [18.25].[31]

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[30] A further point: If van Buitenen and Co. were right, then we might expect the Sanskrit to run as follows: "*apratyagātmatvaduḥkhitvaṃ vārayetām*" etc., for in the first line Śaṃkara has started by explaining the designation of the term *tat*, i.e., *tacchabdaḥ*, as the "inner Self" (*pratyagātmārthaḥ*) and then gives the meaning of *tvam*. It might then be argued that the subject of *vārayetām*, viz., *tattvamau* (= *ubhau*) would refer to the two senses to be elided, the state of the *apratyagātman* and that of the *duḥkhin* (in that order). But in fact the text has the reverse order. It seems then that our interpretation is the correct one: that both terms taken jointly (with the meaning of only one term actively elided, that of *tvam*) yield a sense in which the non-inner Self, viz., the *duḥkhin* of the suffering agent, is excluded. The relevant compound would then be *duḥkhitvāpratyagātmatvam*, which is indeed the case. Jagadananda, in his translation (op. cit., p. 262, 18.197), seems to agree with our interpretation, or at least may be construed as not opposed to it: ". . . The word 'That' comes to mean the innermost Self . . . the word 'Thou' comes to mean the same thing as the word 'That' . . . the two words show that the Innermost Self is not unhappy and that *Brahman* is not other than the Self."

[31] *jātikarmādimattvād dhi tasmiñ śabdās tv ahaṃkṛti, na kaścid vartate śabdas tadabhāvāt sva ātmani. ābhāso yatra tatraiva śabdāḥ pratyagdṛśiṃ sthitāḥ, lakṣayeyur na sākṣāt tam abhidadhyuḥ kathaṃcana. na hy ajātyādimān kaścid arthaḥ śabdair nirūpyate . . . ahaṃkartṛātmani nyastaṃ caitanye kartṛtādi yat, neti netīty tat sarvaṃ sāhaṃkartrā niṣidhyate.*

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(iv) This purified meaning of the statement is arrived at by the method of *anvayavyatireka*-, viz., of "conjunction and disjunction." Śaṃkara uses this expression in the US, but does not make its meaning clear. Perhaps the most significant occurrence of the expression is in the following extract:

> In declarations such as "That you are," the meaning of the word "you" is not clearly expressed, so we do not understand that the declaration means, "I am always liberated" (18.181]. [The method of] conjunction and disjunction has been mentioned to discern this, for there is no other way. For when the meaning of the word "you" has been discerned, [the meaning becomes as clear] as a *bilva* fruit held up in the hand. [18.182].[32]

A number of scholars have tried to make sense of the method of conjunction and disjunction in this context.[33] Though Śaṃkara has not elucidated it, his basic meaning is not difficult to grasp. To begin with, the method has to do with predication and rests on *a perceived difference between referents* so as to justify an instance of oblique predication. This becomes clear from another occurrence of the expression in Śaṃkara's commentary on Brahmasūtra 1.1.4. He is explaining the difference between figurative (metaphorical) predication and erroneous predication.

> Where there is a well-known distinction between things—as when one thing with a particular form, possessing a mane etc., is, through conjunction and disjunction (*anvayavyatirekābhyām*), the familiar obvious referent (*mukhyo*) of the word and idea "lion," and something else, a man, is known to be richly endowed with qualities of a lion, such as ruthlessness, valour etc.—then [figurative predication applies and] the word and idea of "lion" are figurative in respect of the man. This does not obtain when the [relevant] distinction between things is not known.[34]

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[32] *tat tvam asyādivākyeṣu tvampadarthāvivekataḥ, vyajyate naiva vākyārtho nityamukto'ham ity ataḥ. anvayavyatirekoktis tadvivekāya nānyathā, tvampadārthaviveke hi pāṇāv arpitabilvavat.* Note that here too it is said that one must discern the meaning only of "you" for the declaration to become clear.

[33] See, e.g., van Buitenen, op. cit., p. 63, note 174; Mayeda, op. cit., pp. 51f.; Alston, op. cit., p. 318 (and pp. 360–1).

[34] *[dehādāv abhimāno gauṇo na mithyeti cen na, prasiddhavastubhedasya gauṇatvamukhyatvaprasiddheḥ]. yasya hi prasiddho vastubhedaḥ yathā kesarādimān ākṛtiviśeṣo' anvayavyatirekābhyām siṃhaśabdapratyayabhāṅ mukhyo'nyaḥ prasiddhaḥ tataś cānyaḥ puruṣaḥ prāyikaiḥ krauryaśauryādibhiḥ siṃhaguṇaiḥ saṃpannaḥ siddhaḥ tasya puruṣe siṃhaśabdapratyayau gauṇau bhavato nāprasiddhavastubhedasya*; D&B, p. 96. Śaṃkara argues in the same vein towards the end of his commentary on Gītā 18.66. This evidence from the BSB is not adduced by the other scholars mentioned.

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When the distinction is not realised, Śaṃkara goes on to say, one is in *error*, as e.g., when one mistakes a tree-stump for a person in poor light, not perceiving the difference between the two. So the method of conjunction and disjunction is based on realised/perceived difference. We realise that "lion" (as word and idea) applies obviously and directly to a particular beast (conjunction), and not to anything else (disjunction). On this basis, we can, in the right circumstances, appropriately call a warrior a "lion." We may now revert to "That you are" in the US.

Under normal circumstances, the meaning of "you" as intended in the Upanishadic context to apply only to the inner Self is not clearly known, so the great declaration cannot do its enlightening work in us. But when we are instructed correctly and understand the intention of the text, that is, when we understand that "you" applies only to the *pratyagātman* or inner Self and use the word in this way (conjunction), and not to the *ahaṃkartṛ/duḥkhī* or empirical self so that we do not use the word thus (disjunction),[35] then the meaning of the text becomes manifest (viz., "I am always liberated"), and we can begin the process of its proper *realisation.*[36]

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[35] The method of *anvayavyatireka-* applies as between a word (and its idea) and a referent: *anvayavyatirekau hi padārthasya padasya ca* . . . US.18.96.

[36] Hence one cannot accept Mayeda's explanation of the application of *anvayavyatireka-* here: "The word 'That' refers to the inner *Ātman*. . . . This is the meaning which is present (*anvaya*) in, or compatible with, the two words. . . . On the other hand, the word 'Thou' ordinarily means 'a sufferer of pain'. . . . This is the meaning absent (*vyatireka*) in, or incompatible with, the word 'That'. . . . Further, the word 'That' may mean here 'something other than the inner *Ātman*' . . . but this meaning is absent (*vyatireka*) in, or incompatible with, the word 'Thou'" (op. cit., pp. 52–3). How would this explanation service the use of the expression in the example of the lion and the warrior? And, as we have noted almost *ad nauseam*, Śaṃkara explicitly says that the method of conjunction and disjunction applies only to "you." We may derive useful information from G. Cardona's article "*Anvaya* and *Vyatireka* in Indian Grammar," *The Adyar Library Bulletin*, Vols. 31–32, 1967–8, pp. 313–352. Though the analysis here is confined, as the title of the article indicates, mainly to the sphere of grammar, Cardona is right to suggest that the grammatical basis of the use of the compound *anvayavyatireka-* underlies subsequent logical and philosophical usage. Two conclusions relevant for our purposes emerge from Cardona's analysis: (i) that the compound bears on words used in their literal or primary sense (and this is precisely the context in which Śaṃkara uses the compound with reference to his example of the word "lion"), and (ii) that the rule applies on the basis of a perceived difference (to revert to our example, the word "lion" is used in its primary sense only of a real lion (*anvaya*), and in that sense is not used of anything else (*vyatireka*). It is only on this basis that it can be used metaphorically, e.g., of a warrior. That is, we can apply the metaphor only when we know that the word is not being used literally). In the case of *tat tvam asi*, Śaṃkara, however, is innovative.

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(v) As De Smet has pointed out, the kind of implication or oblique predication applied in the great declaration is an instance of what was later called *jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā*, viz., "predication by exclusion and non-exclusion," i.e., by excising and retaining the connotation of a term.

> *Lakṣaṇā* or implication does not in every case lead us to a *paramārtha* or absolute sense, for *lakṣyārtha* [the implied sense] is of three kinds: (a) *jahat*, i.e., exclusive of the primary sense (*mukhyārtha*), as in the case of *dvirepha* ("double r") which comes to mean "bee" (*bhramara*) because *bhramara* contains the letter *r* twice; (b) *ajahat*, i.e., inclusive of the *mukhyārtha*, as in the case of "red" in "the red runs" for "the red (horse) runs" ("red," while directly designating a particular horse, does not exclude the notion, expressed by its primary meaning, that this horse is red); (c) *jahadajahat*, i.e., both including and excluding the primary meaning, as in the case of "cloth" in "my cloth is burned" for "a part of my cloth is burned." Because in the interpretation of the Vedānta statements the *mukhyārtha* of their terms, i.e., their proper meaning (*svārtha*) . . . is to be preserved (for otherwise their absolute sense would have no contents graspable by us), while, at the same time, the limitations which it connotes in our way of thinking are to be removed, this interpretation is based upon *jahadajahallakṣaṇā* only, the form of implication which both excludes and includes what we primarily understand through these terms" (CIDA, p. 189).

We have seen how this form of intrinsic analogy applies to the *tat tvam asi* declaration.[37]

(vi) Finally, the enlightening knowledge yielded by a correct interpretation of the declaration, according to Śaṃkara, the knowledge

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Tvam is being used literally, no doubt, according to the rule of *anvayavyatireka-*, but only in respect of part of its literal meaning (so this is also a case of proximate *lakṣaṇā*).

[37] In another article, De Smet offers an interpretation of *anvayavyatireka- a la* Śaṃkara, similar to, but perhaps conceptually less economical than, ours: "Let us notice Śaṅkara's innovative application of the *anvayavyatirekī* method. It is equivalent to the *jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā* method. . . . It is used to understand a 'great saying' which is true . . . and yet cannot be true according to the primary meaning (*mukhyārtha*) of its terms. One must then seek for their secondary meaning (*lakṣyārtha*) as suggested by the context which, in this case, can only be their supreme meaning (*paramārtha*). This seeking progresses through *apavāda* or *vyatireka* which, in the light of *neti neti*, excludes all the finite objects denoted by the *mukhyārtha*: to that extent the *lakṣaṇā* is *jahat*, exclusive. But it preserves the proper notion (*svārtha*) of the terms; hence it is *ajahat*, inclusive. It is then possible, in a final step, to elevate the two *svārtha*s to their highest possible value and thus accede to their common *paramārtha* (*anvaya* in the light of *Pūrṇa* [Fullness])"; see "Forward Steps in Śaṅkara Research," *Darshana International*, Vol. XXVI, No. 3, p. 41.

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that the "real" I or Self is ever free, does not create a new reality. Enlightenment for Śaṃkara does not bring new things into being; it only dispels ignorance so that we can see reality as it is. He gives a number of examples to illustrate this state of affairs. Thus he refers to the well-known story of the ten "wise" men crossing a hazardous stream. They get across and one of them counts to check that they are all present. Overlooking himself he counts only nine. Consternation! Where's the tenth? Another of the group does the same thing. Only nine! And another. Where's the tenth? A bemused passerby notes their quandary, and says kindly to the last counter: "*You* are the tenth!" (*daśamas tvam asi*). He enlightens them, not by rescuing someone from a watery grave, or by adding to their number, i.e., by creating a new reality, but by showing up the situation for what it really is. In short, a course of action to produce something new is not required; what is required is the knowledge that dispels prevailing ignorance. So Śaṃkara says: "As from the statement 'You are the tenth' [i.e., directly], so simply from such declarations as 'That you are,' one knows one's own Self, the Witness of the entire mental apparatus (*antaḥkaraṇa*)."[38] Enlightening knowledge is a sublating knowledge.

Thus does Śaṃkara continue to show the unity of the scriptures, their comprising one coherent statement (*ekavākyatā*). Everything fits in—injunctions, prohibitions, descriptions of various kinds (about ourselves, our supreme Goal, Brahman, and the relationship between us and Brahman)—to lead us as persuasively and benevolently as possible to this Goal. The scripture, says the great Advaitin, loves us like a mother,[39] and nourishes us with her teaching. Of course, for Śaṃkara it is the interpretation of his Advaitic tradition (*sampradāya*) that is the true guide to this End: the realisation of our inmost identity with the boundless awareness and bliss that is Brahman.

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[38] *daśamas tvam asīty evaṃ tat tvam asyādivākyataḥ, svam ātmānaṃ vijānāti kṛtsnāntaḥkaraṇekṣaṇam*; US.18.176. That enlightening knowledge (*vidyā*) informs one about something not known and so shows up what already is the case, rather than produces a new state of affairs (as actions do), is one of the main points of Śaṃkara's commentary on BAUp.1.4.10: "Knowledge of Brahman [viz., that I am Brahman] is never experienced to directly remove or produce the attribute of something. . . . It is known always to put an end to ignorance . . . it is unable to produce or remove something real": *na hi kvacit sākṣād vastudharmasyāpoḍhrī dṛṣṭā kartrī vā brahmavidyā. avidyāyās tu sarvatraiva nivartikā dṛśyate . . . na . . . pāramārthikaṃ vastu kartuṃ nivartayituṃ vārhati brahmavidyā*; TPU, p. 669.

[39] "If the thought 'I am ever free, I am the Real itself' could never be realised, why would the scripture declare it like a diligent mother?": *nityamuktaḥ sad evāsmīty evaṃ cen na bhaven matiḥ, kim arthaṃ śrāvayaty evaṃ mātṛvac chrutir ādṛtā*. US.18.3.

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This is not an impossible realisation, else the scripture would not teach it so diligently. In return for its maternal gift, Śaṃkara shows the scripture the greatest possible respect by his restrained and careful exegesis. To what extent we may or may not feel disposed to accept this interpretation is a separate question. In important respects in this regard, De Smet for one, has expressed reservation. Yet I have discovered that he and his two gurus, Śaṃkara and Thomas Aquinas, have one thing in common: an uplifting, liberating and healing singlemindedness of vision and endeavour. Or as De Smet would put it more modestly: *in omnibus respice Finem*: In all things look to the End.

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ŚAṂKARA ON DIVINE GRACE

Bradley J. Malkovsky

During the past hundred years or more, nearly every facet of Śaṃkara's thought has been systematically explored by scholars from India, Japan and the West.[1] Perhaps the one element of his system that has not received due attention is his teaching on the necessity of divine grace (*prasāda*, *anugraha*) for the attainment of liberation.[2] In fact, it may be argued that grace is the overlooked feature of Śaṃkara's soteriology.

That Śaṃkara has a teaching on grace at all is contested, as the modern secondary literature amply attests.[3] Perhaps the primary reason for this disagreement about the reality of grace in Śaṃkara's

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[1] This essay draws extensively on my dissertation *The Role of Divine Grace in the Soteriology of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya* (University of Tübingen, 1993), which is presently undergoing a comprehensive rewrite for publication.

[2] In addition to *prasāda* (grace, serenity) and *anugraha* (favor, assistance), Śaṃkara employs a number of other words expressing divine mercy and benevolence, e.g., *dayā* (sympathy, compassion, pity), *kṛpā* (pity, tenderness, compassion), *karuṇa* (compassion, pity), *anukrośaṃ* (tenderness, compassion, kindness).

[3] There are at least four scholarly positions today on the place of divine grace in Śaṃkara's thought. The first makes no mention at all of grace when treating Śaṃkara's soteriology, focusing its analysis on the efficacy of knowledge alone to bring about liberation. Cf. Sengaku Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1979); Karl H. Potter, *Advaita Vedānta Up to Śaṃkara and His Pupils* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981). A second approach finds Śaṃkara outright inimical to the notion of a salvific divine benevolence. See Georges Thibaut, *Vedānta-Sūtras with the Commentary by Śaṅkarācārya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988) I:cxxvii–cxxviii; Troy Wilson Organ, *Hinduism: Its Historical Development* (Woodbury, New York: Barron's, 1974) 267. According to a third group of Śaṃkara's interpreters, Śaṃkara affirms the reality of divine grace as a means to liberation, but only as a lower-level (*vyavahārika*) truth that will be ultimately cancelled out and superseded by a higher awareness of the monistic nature of reality. In the higher consciousness grace turns out to be illusory. Cf. T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Superimposition in Advaita Vedānta* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1985) 18–19; Paul Deussen, *The System of the Vedānta* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1912) 86. The fourth and final position affirms the reality of divine grace in Śaṃkara and does not hold this view to be inconsistent with Śaṃkara's non-dualistic metaphysics. See Kokileswar Sastri, *An Introduction* to *Adwaita Philosophy* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1926) 221–222; V. H. Date, *Vedānta Explained* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973) II:521–522, 533; Richard De Smet, "Contemplation in Shankara and Rāmānuja," *Prayer and Contemplation*, ed. C. M. Vadakkekara (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1980) 212–214.

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thought is to be found in the non-dualistic understanding of reality to which he subscribes. Doctrines of grace, after all, are inseparable from the ontological context in which they are embedded. What exactly does non-duality (*a-dvaita*) mean in ontological—not just epistemological—terms for Śaṃkara? One's understanding of what constitutes grace for Śaṃkara and whether grace exists in some ultimate sense in his system will be determined in large part by the doctrine of being and relation that one ascribes to him.

The connection between ontology and grace is readily apparent in regard to the two fundamental readings of *advaita* that we meet today. The interpretation of *advaita* that is the most common equates non-duality with monism and acosmic illusionism. Only the Absolute, or the *paraṃ brahman*, is said to exist; everything else is but an illusory appearance that must be overcome and eliminated. Here there can be no talk of grace except on the level of mere appearance. There is no grace, because nothing exists finally that could be the object of divine grace. Only *brahman* is.

The other view of Śaṃkara's non-duality we may call a form of realism. Here the world is not regarded as a mere illusory appearance, even while it is also true that the world lacks the self-sufficiency and ontological 'density' of its source. The world is a lesser reality, continuously dependent upon *brahman* for every moment of its existence and activity. The world, moreover, while distinct from *brahman*, is never separate from *brahman* nor external to it. It is constantly pervaded by its reality-providing and directing cause without that cause undergoing the slightest change by virtue of its influence upon the world. Thus Śaṃkara can say: "Names and forms in all their states have their self in *brahman* alone, but *brahman* has not its self in them."[4] This relation of God and world has been called a "non-reciprocal dependence relation."[5] Here there is room for grace, because the ontological reality of the creature is taken seriously. In what I have to say about grace in Śaṃkara's system I will be working from a realist interpretation of his thought.[6]

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[4] TaiUpBh II.6.1. *ato nāmarūpe sarvāvasthe brahmanaivātmavato. na brahma tadātmakam.* For the Sanskrit see *Ten Principal Upanisads with Śaṅkarabhāsya.* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987) 299, lines 2–3.

[5] Sara Grant, *Towards an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-Dualist Christian* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1991) 35.

[6] Here I wish to express my indebtedness to Richard De Smet in taking the ontological position that I do.

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Śaṃkara speaks of divine grace and mercy in a wide variety of contexts, and though his remarks are scattered in a seemingly haphazard fashion throughout his corpus, what strikes one initially is that the issue of grace does appear in almost all of his works.[7] Yet nowhere does Śaṃkara provide a separate treatise or an extended discussion on grace or offer his views in a developed systematic fashion. His statements are often cryptic and opaque and they sometimes appear where one would least expect them,[8] precisely because the texts upon which he is commenting (Śaṃkara is primarily a commentator) do not even remotely allude to grace. So a good deal of detective work has to go into piecing together Śaṃkara's fragmented teachings on grace to see whether they form a coherent whole. I believe that they do, even given a tension in his thinking about which I will speak near the end of this essay.

Śaṃkara not only speaks of the grace and mercy of the teacher[9] and of the revealed Upaniṣads,[10] without which liberation is impossible; he also refers to the gracious activity of the Lord (*īśvara*).[11] Śaṃkara tends to regard this Lord ontologically as the supreme reality (*paraṃ brahman*), not a lesser reality, but I will not attempt here to argue this point. Instead I would like to refer to the research of Paul Hacker, who has shown that the move to subordinate *īśvara* to the *paraṃ brahman* and to relegate this *īśvara* to the plane of *māyā* or illusion is typical of later Advaita but not of the master himself.[12] I

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[7] I have restricted myself to the following works of Śaṃkara: his commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtra*, the principal *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and his independent treatise *Upadeśasāhasrī*. Almost all the hymns attributed to Śaṃkara are regarded as spurious today by a great number of critical scholars as are the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, the *Ātmabodha* and other popular works.

[8] I have found it useful to distinguish three types of statements in Śaṃkara's commentaries where he affirms the reality of grace: (a) passages where Śaṃkara adds nothing to texts upon which he is commenting that already speak favorably of grace; (b) passages where he expands on or strengthens such texts; (c) passages where Śaṃkara introduces the topic of grace altogether. I was surprised to discover that the third kind of statement was by far the most numerous.

[9] Śaṃkara expressly refers to the grace or mercy of the teacher in BṛUpBh II.1.20, IV.3.14, IV.4.15; ChUpBh VI.14.12; TaiUpBh Intro.; AiUpBh I.3.13; KaUpBh I.2.13; MuUpBh Intro., I.2.12, III.1.2; BhGBh XVIII.50; Upad II.1.6, II.2.74; GKBh IV.100. He does not use the expression in the BrSūBh, ĪśaUpBh, KenaUpBh, or PrUpBh.

[10] Śaṃkara speaks of the grace or mercy of scripture in BṛUpBh II.1.20; KaUpBh II.1.15; GKBh IV.100, but does not use such expressions in the other ten writings under consideration.

[11] E.g., BrSūBh II.3.41, III.2.5; TaiUpBh I.11.4; BhGBh Intro., II.11, II.39, VII.3, VII.23, XV.10 etc.

[12] Cf. "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śaṃkaras: Avidyā, Nāmarūpa,

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have also located two passages myself where Śaṃkara declares the "That" (*tat*) of the "Great Saying" (*mahā-vākya*) "That thou art" (*tat tvam asi*) to be the very personal *īśvara* rather than the *paraṃ brahman*.[13] This is unthinkable for post-Śaṃkara Advaita.

Functions of Divine Grace

In what follows I will name three examples of the Lord's graciousness found in Śaṃkara's works, the first two of which do not deal with life's ultimate goal. The first instance of grace applies to the regulation of the law of *karma*; the second is linked to the spiritual practitioner's acquisition of supernatural powers. Only the third instance of grace relates directly to final liberation.

In the first case, the Lord acts as a gracious governor of the law of *karma* or moral retribution, a law that the Lord has freely brought into existence. *Īśvara's* impartiality in administering the proper fruits of creaturely action and of not interfering with the cosmic law of justice is not explicitly referred to as a grace by Śaṃkara. Yet it appears to be implicit to Śaṃkara's thinking that the Lord's governance of the law of retribution is indeed a gracious dispensation, and for two reasons. First, by means of the Lord's control of the law the Lord establishes a great good, namely universal justice and the world's stability.[14] Second, this maintenance of cosmic fairness is not the result of a power that sets limitations on the Lord or impels the Lord to act in such and such a way; rather *īśvara* is completely independent and sovereign in the divine action toward the world.[15] The fair and good governance of the universe by the Lord is entirely free.

The second instance of the Lord's graciousness is the granting of certain miraculous powers for those who have exercised strenuous spiritual practice on the way to final liberation.[16] These powers, which

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Māyā, Īśvara, "*Paul Hacker: Kleine Schriften*, ed. L. Schmithausen (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978) 108. John Taber has provided a translation of this important essay that is to be found in *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*, ed. Wilhelm Halbfass (Albany: SUNY, 1995) 57–100. Hacker's point about the *brahman-īśvara* relation can be found on p. 94 of the new translation.

[13] Cf. BrSūBh I.2.13, III.2.6.

[14] KenaUpBh III.1–2.

[15] AiUpBh I.3.1.

[16] BrSūBh III.2.5.

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are probably the eight *mahā-siddhis* listed in Patañjali's Yoga-Sūtra,[17] do not themselves constitute liberation, but are by-products and signs of advanced interiority and mind-control. They include the ability to acquire things at will, of becoming as light as a feather, of completely mastering oneself etc. Acquiring these special powers is not a prerequisite for liberation, but their reception is regarded by Śaṃkara as effects of the Lord's grace.

The third example of divine grace functions as the most important of all, because it is the cause of spiritual liberation. But before we examine how divine grace contributes to liberation we need to first ask what it is that we are liberated from. To say "rebirth" is to give a standard classical answer, but this is not a full enough articulation of the problem to be overcome. For Śaṃkara human suffering is ultimately due to *avidyā* or ignorance, and this *avidyā* gives rise to desire and action, which, in their turn, bring about consequences that necessitate rebirth. Thus the ultimate good that divine grace could confer on suffering beings would be the eradication of *avidyā*. And this is Śaṃkara's expressed teaching in his commentaries on Brahma-Sūtra II.3.41[18] and III.2.5,[19] Taittirīya Upaniṣad

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[17] Cf. Yoga-Sūtra III.16–56 and Śaṃkara on BrSū I.3.33.

[18] "Final release . . . is effected through knowledge caused by the grace (*anugraha*) of the Lord." Thibaut transl. (see note 3) II:59. *tadanugrahahetukenaiva ca vijñānena mokṣasiddhirbhaviturmahati*. See *Brahma-Sūtra with Śaṅkarabhāṣya. Works of Śaṅkarācārya in Original Sanskrit*, Vol. III (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, no date; henceforth MB edition) 296, line 2. The *tad* refers to *īśvara*, who is described in the previous two lines as being "the highest Self, the superintendent of all actions, the witness residing in all beings, the cause of all intelligence . . ." Thibaut II:59. This Lord, then, is not seen to be ontologically subordinate to the highest reality, for he is in fact the supreme *ātman*.

[19] In his commentary on BrSūBh III.2.5–6 Śaṃkara teaches that the soul and the Lord are first of all quite unalike, especially in as far as the soul is embodied and in bondage. But he goes on to add that there is also a "hidden equality" of natures that is obscured by ignorance. It is through the grace of the Lord that the soul's ignorance is removed and it realizes its non-duality with *īśvara*. The soul does not know its essential nature without the help of grace. Śaṃkara compares the ignorance-destroying divine grace given to the soul with medicine (*auṣadham*) given to a blind man to restore his sight after he has been afflicted with an eye disease. The following is from Śaṃkara's commentary on *sūtra* 5: "We say that the equality of attributes, although existing, is hidden by the veil of Nescience. In the case of some persons indeed who strenuously meditate on the Lord (*parameśvara*) and who, their ignorance being dispelled at last, obtain through the favour (*prasāda*) of the Lord extraordinary powers and insight, that hidden equality becomes manifest—just as through the action of strong medicines the power of sight of a blind man becomes manifest; but it does not on its own account reveal itself to all men." Thibaut transl. II:139. MB 347, lines 10–14, reads: *vidyamānamapi tattirohitamavidyādivyavadhānāt. tat-*

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I.11.4[20] and Bhagavad-Gītā II.39.[21] The final cause of the dawn of liberating knowledge is the grace of the Lord. This grace is essentially illuminative, restoring the soul to the state of blissful awareness of its non-duality with Brahman, thereby eliminating a false understanding of itself as essentially a worldly agent (*kartṛ*) and enjoyer (*bhoktṛ*) of the results of actions.

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punastirohitaṃ satparameśvaramabhidhyāyato yatamānasya jantorvidhūtadhvāntasya timiratiraskṛteva dṛkśaktirausadhavīryādīśvaraprasādātsaṃsiddhasya kasyacidevāvirbhavati na svabhāvata eva sarveṣāṃ jantūnām. Śaṃkara implicitly identifies this *īśvara* in his commentary on *sūtra* 6 as the supreme reality by making the Lord the referent of the *mahā-vākya* "That thou art." He explains further that this Great Saying "teaches that the Lord is the Self of the soul" (jīvāyopadiśatīśvarātmatvam). MB 348, line 5.

[20] The context of this passage is a discussion as to what contributes to liberation. More specifically, do rites and actions have the capacity to bring about liberation of themselves, without recourse to understanding the truth of scripture, or is something more needed? If rites are effective in removing sins, could it not be, asks Śaṃkara's imaginary opponent, that the total removal of sins through the performance of rites will automatically produce the liberated state? To this Śaṃkara replies: "There is surely no such rule that knowledge arises from the mere elimination of the obstructions alone, and not from the grace of God (*īśvara-prasāda*) or the practice of austerity, meditation, etc.; for (as a matter of fact) non-injury, celibacy, etc., are aids to enlightenment; and hearing, thinking, and meditating are the direct causes of it." Transl. EU I:282. *na hi pratibandhakṣayādeva vidyotpadyate na tvīśvaraprasādatapodhyānādyanuṣṭhānāditi niyamo'sti. ahiṃsābrahmacaryādīnāṃ ca vidyāṃ pratyupakārakatvātsākṣādeva ca kāraṇatvācchravaṇamanananididhyāsanādīnām.* TPU 279, lines 13–16.

It is perhaps instructive to observe here that there is nothing in this section of the TaiUp that would constrain Śaṃkara to make mention of the Lord's grace as a factor in the emergence of knowledge. It is therefore all the more striking that he does so. He does not, however, explain just how divine grace operates in the process leading to liberation, but he does place *prasāda* at the head of his list of factors that contribute to enlightenment. Only after referring to grace does Śaṃkara make mention of austerity and meditation. His emphasis, however, in this particular passage appears finally to be more on the side of human effort than on divine gift: *śravaṇa* (hearing), *manana* (thinking) and *nididhyāsana* (meditating) are the cause (*kāraṇa*) of enlightenment. This three-fold approach to scripture is an absolute prerequisite to liberation.

[21] In BhG II.39 Kṛṣṇa declares to Arjuna that by adhering to the wisdom he is about to receive he "will get rid of the bondage of action." Not surprisingly, Śaṃkara's gloss on this passage focuses on the evil of all action and the necessity of renouncing it—even good action—for the sake of final liberation. It is in this context that Śaṃkara once again introduces the topic of divine grace on his own: "O Pārtha, you will get rid of the bondage of action—action is itself the bondage described as righteousness and unrighteousness; you will get rid of that bondage by the attainment of Knowledge through God's grace (*īśvaraprasāda*). This is the idea." Translation by Swami Gambhirananda, *Bhagavadgītā With the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1984) 86. *he pārtha karmabandhaṃ karma eva dharmādharmākhyo bandhaḥ karmabandhaḥ taṃ prahāsyasi īśvaraprasādanimittajñānaprāpteḥ iti abhiprāyaḥ.* Sanskrit text from *Bhagavad-Gītā with Śāṅkarabhāṣya*, ed. K. Goyandaka (Gorakhpur: Gītā Press, 1988) 56, lines 16–19.

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It is perhaps helpful to reflect a bit more on this notion of ignorance that is the cause of human misery. What is this ignorance exactly? For Śaṃkara it amounts to what he calls *adhyāsa* or superimposition, what we moderns might call projection. We project onto the realities of world and self incorrect notions about their nature, which in turn generates attachment and leads to blind action. This is an innate and universal error, affecting all people. We are born into a mix-up or confusion about who we essentially are, what constitutes the real and what must be done for us to find lasting happiness. We inevitably identify ourselves with the changing states of our mind and emotions, our body, our possessions, our relations to the people whom we love or hate, in short, with our everyday experience. But in fact we are none of these. What we fail to see is that the serene and joyous self-consciousness that is *brahman* constitutes the unchanging innermost reality of our being and identity; it is the true center that is not known when we become blinded by attachment to the world.

What is more, our understanding of the mystery of the Absolute or *brahman* becomes distorted, too, through *avidyā*. Not knowing the Ground, we are unable to discern the eternal from the temporal. If we hear of a personal Lord, we often enough regard this Being as an object alien to and separate from our existence to which we must be united by somehow overcoming a distance. But *brahman* is the substratum of all things, the hidden depth of our own subjectivity. If the I-It relation to God, which objectivizes and limits the divine reality, is an error, then the alternative is not just the I-Thou relation made famous by Martin Buber.[22] This, too, can be deceptive if not understood correctly. We run the risk here of overlooking the pre-given divine immanence in our search for God. We may make the transcendent Thou into a kind of super-object existing in its own sphere separate from the world. The Indian or Upaniṣadic breakthrough was in the revelation not merely of interpersonal relatedness but also of the knowledge of God as the supreme "I" residing within, whose reflection each of us is in a limited way.

So the question is: How do we attain this experience of God as our true Self? Śaṃkara's answer is that we have to eliminate all the false notions we have about ourselves and God. We need to hear,

[22] For this and some of what follows see G. Gispert-Sauch, "Shankaracharya and Our Theological Task," *Vidyajyoti* 42 (1978):349–350.

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reflect on and interiorize the truth of scripture about these matters until complete conviction opens us in total receptiveness to the dawning of the truth from within.[23] We need to purify mind and heart from all passion, projection and self-centeredness. We need to desire liberation to the exclusion of every other earthly desire. We must have an insatiable desire to know *brahman*.[24] We need to cultivate virtues and habits conducive to liberation, such as compassion toward others, fortitude, concentration, faith, renunciation of earthly pleasure and prestige. And, he says, we require divine grace.

Many interpreters of Śaṃkara will object to this last point on grace on the grounds that Śaṃkara makes knowledge the exclusive cause of liberation. It is indeed true that liberation through knowledge is the central axiom of Śaṃkara's soteriology. Everything else is subservient to this truth. That is why liberation-through-knowledge is much more frequently proclaimed by Śaṃkara than is liberation-through-grace. Yet it is a mistake to pit the one against the other. Śaṃkara may oppose knowledge and works or knowledge and ritual, but there is not a single instance in his writings where he attempts to show the incompatibility of liberation-through-knowledge with liberation-through-grace. It is also true that although grace finds a place in Śaṃkara's system, it is never regarded as an independent means of liberation. While grace is indispensable, Śaṃkara never exhorts his readers to put their trust in the divine mercy as later forms of Hindu spirituality have done with their teaching of *prapatti*, or total dependence on the Lord for salvation. This, then, raises the question of the relation between divine grace and human effort in Śaṃkara's thought.

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[23] This triple-method of assimilating the truth of scripture via hearing (*śravaṇa*), reasoning (*manana*) and meditation (*nididhyāsana*) does not originate with Śaṃkara, but is derived from BṛUp II.4.5.

[24] In the introduction to his commentary on the KenaUp Śaṃkara writes: "The longing for the knowledge of the indwelling Self arises only in that desireless man who has renounced all transitory, external means and ends by virtue of the emergence of a special kind of tendency (in his mind) created by works done in this life or in previous ones." Translation by Swami Gambhirananda, *Eight Upaniṣads With the Commentary of Śamkarācārya* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982, henceforth EU) I:34. See also Śaṃkara's four-fold requirement in BrSūBh I.1.1 for setting out on the path towards realization of *brahman*.

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Divine Grace and Human Effort

Śaṃkara teaches that ignorance may be entirely destroyed upon hearing for the first time a "Great Saying" (*mahā-vākya*) from the Upaniṣads such as "That thou art" (*tat tvam asi*) and fully gasping its import.[25] The Great Sayings encapsule the essence of the Upaniṣads, whose purpose it is to undo superimposition by awakening the soul to its essential nature. However, revealed scripture is powerless to eradicate ignorance in one who is not properly prepared, and so it is inevitable that the normal process leading to enlightenment is a long and arduous one.

When a *mahā-vākya* is not properly comprehended Śaṃkara prescribes repetition of it with the aid of a teacher. The main task of the teacher is to make known and to clarify the truth of scripture, in particular those passages that speak of the unity of *brahman* and *ātman*. The teacher does this especially by reasoning out the truth of sacred doctrine for the pupil. Both teacher and scripture work together to purify the mind of the student and to thereby prepare it for the illumination of the interior Self.[26] Śaṃkara indicates that it is not so much a keen intellect which is required of the hearer of scripture, as a pure mind, if religious truth is to be grasped: "It is well-known that although the word heard may be the same, still its understanding occurs according to the purity or the impurity of the hearer's mind."[27] When the mind is sufficiently purified of egotism, desire and the sense of agentship, when it assimilates to itself the teachings of scripture, only then has the foundation been laid for the emergence or manifestation of the higher knowledge. But even this does not occur automatically.

Śaṃkara does not teach that liberating knowledge dawns of itself upon the attainment of the proper mental and moral dispositions and a proper theoretical grasp of the "Great Sayings." It is rather the case that the fully pure and quiescent practitioner (*sādhaka*) can only await the breakthrough into the higher consciousness in passive and trusting expectation, continuously inspired by the desire to know *brahman*, fully aware of its inability to reach the goal through

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[25] See BrSūBh V.1.2.

[26] KaUpBh II.1.11.

[27] ChUpBh VIII.9.2. Tr. Swami Gambhirananda, *Chandogya Upaniṣad With the Commentary of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983) 636. TPU 591, lines 12–13.

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unaided effort. The final and permanent removal of ignorance is something over which it has not the slightest control or claim.[28] The seeker's contribution to the process of liberation lies solely in the preparatory stage of removing false conceptions, distractions, desires, and inappropriate moral tendencies and in keeping alive the longing to attain the highest truth. Liberating knowledge is ultimately dependent on the self-disclosure of the Absolute Itself, which is the *ātman* of the seeker.

Thus we observe a paradox. Human effort is indispensable for liberation, but it is ultimately insufficient. The grace of illumination comes to those who exert themselves, but this effort, although indispensable, is of itself inadequate to bring about the desired goal. No amount of spiritual investment entitles one to the dawning of knowledge. And so while it is true that knowledge will not dawn on those who make no effort toward self-realization, it is also true that effort alone cannot force liberating insight either. The knowledge that removes all suffering is gratuitous in nature, according to Śaṃkara. Liberation is not the result of action, although the effort given to purify oneself may be regarded as an auxiliary or indirect cause of liberation. Thus divine grace and human freedom are both necessary for the soul to attain realization of its true nature.

Does the divine grace which comes to the seeker always and inevitably come to those who have attained the proper spiritual disposition? There is nothing in Śaṃkara's writings that would suggest that the Lord ever withholds grace from the recipient who has been made pure enough to become enlightened. But how active—or better, how interactive—is the Lord in responding to the effort of the *sādhaka*?

The answer to this question is difficult to ascertain with any finality. There appear to be two positions that are held in tension in Śamkara's system. The first suggests an immutable presence of grace in the depth of the creature, the second a divine response and dialogical interaction, in short a more personalist understanding.

The first alternative, which underscores the divine impartiality, is supported by Śaṃkara's exegesis of Kaṭha Upaniṣad I.2.23 and

[28] Cf. BrSūBh IV.1.2. "In the mind of one on whom repetition is enjoined as a duty, there arise infallibly notions opposed to the true notion of Brahman, such as 'I have a claim on this (knowledge of the Self) as an agent; this is to be done by me.'" Thibaut II:337.

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Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad III.2.3. These verses from the Upaniṣads teach that liberation is the result of a divine election. Only those people will be liberated to whom the *ātman* chooses to reveal itself.[29] Śaṃkara does not care much for ideas of divine election; they appear to compromise divine impartiality toward creatures. For instance, already in regard to questions of the inequality of creaturely suffering and the law of *karma*, Śaṃkara defends the Lord's neutrality twice in the Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya. The Lord in his activity of connecting past deeds with future results is like a rain that falls equally on different kinds of plants.[30] So it is not surprising that Śaṃkara takes Upaniṣadic passages like KaUp I.2.23 and MuUp III.2.3 that speak of divine election—perhaps even an arbitrary election—and turns them around to be statements of how one is made eligible for the reception of divine grace. This eligibility is made possible through the soul's longing, prayer and effort. Here a divine predetermination is excluded, as it is incompatible with Śaṃkara's affirmation of human freedom and the Lord's impartiality towards all souls. Quite in keeping with this theology is a passage Śaṃkara is fond of quoting from the Bhagavad-Gītā: "And I am always the same to all beings" (IX.29).[31]

Further evidence of the Lord's gracious presence at the core of the creature's consciousness is provided by Śaṃkara when he speaks of the Lord being like fire, in his commentary on the Gītā IX.29, a passage we have just heard. Just as one warms oneself by drawing near to an immobile fire that sheds its heat equally in all directions, so too does the seeker of liberation receive the Lord's grace by approaching him with fervent devotion.[32] Only in that sense does

[29] KaUp I.2.23: "This Self is not attained through much study, nor through the intellect nor through much hearing. He is attained by him whom he chooses (*vṛṇute*). To him the Self reveals (*vivṛṇute*) his own being." My translation. This verse is identical to MuUp III.2.3.

[30] Cf. BrSūBh II.1.34, II.3.42.

[31] *samo'haṃ sarvabhūteṣu*. This verse is quoted in *Upadeśasāharī* I.10.8, I.10.11 and I.14.47.

[32] In Śaṃkara's commentary on BhG IX.29 it is the Lord who speaks: "I am like fire (*agnivat*): As fire does not ward off cold from those who are afar, but removes it from those who approach near, similarly, I favour (*anugṛhṇāmi*) the devotees, not others. But those who worship Me, God (*īśvaraṃ*) with devotion, they exist in Me—by their very nature (*svabhāvata*); they do not exist in Me because of My love (*rāganimittaṃ*). Thus there is no hatred towards them (the latter)." Gambhirananda transl. 394–395. Sanskrit text in Gītā Press edition 242, lines 5–12. *Raga*, translated by Gambhirananda as "love," is a kind of affection that involves attachment. Such an attitude is foreign to Śaṃkara's understanding of a desireless benevolent deity.

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Śaṃkara declare that the Lord favors some and not others. The devotee experiences the favor of the Lord not because the Lord has a special love for the devotee, but because the devotee has become completely disposed to receive the Lord's illumining grace. So this analogy with drawing near to a fire appears to stress the component of human effort in the process leading to enlightenment. Whether through their own effort alone or with effort helped by grace, the spiritually adept have reached a level of inner tranquility, purity and detachment from the world that makes possible their reception of divine gifts.

This insight might profitably lead to a brief discussion of one of Śaṃkara's two preferred words for grace, *prasāda*, which has the root meaning "to fall into the power of," but also "to settle down, grow clear and bright, become placid or tranquil; to become satisfied or pleased or glad, be gracious or kind."[33] To be graced or in a state of grace, according to this word, is to be in a "condition of transluminous peace."[34] As Georg Feuerstein has pointed out, "It is easy to see why the word *prasāda* should have acquired the meaning of 'grace,' since mental tranquility is a precondition for one's entrance into higher states of consciousness. This event is often experienced as being given 'from above,' that is, as an act of grace."[35] Thus in passing beyond mind, by first bringing the mind into a state of deep calm, one enters into an even higher state of inner tranquility and freedom, finally into a state of spiritual transcendence.

Now for Śaṃkara it is the monk who is alone capable of remaining absorbed in the Self, since he alone has renounced "desire for sons, wealth and worlds."[36] Through the practice of celibacy passion is controlled; in such a one liberating knowledge can more easily arise.[37] The monk is to be childlike, "free from guile, pride, and so on, not parading himself by a display of wisdom, learning and virtuousness."[38] Of all people, the monk is the one most likely and most

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[33] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981) 696, col. 3. The other word is *anugraha*, meaning "to follow in taking or plundering; to support; to uphold; to receive, welcome; to treat with kindness, favour, oblige." Its root *grah*, means "to take or seize." See Monier-Williams 32, col. 1.

[34] O. Lacombe, *L'absolu selon le Vedānta* (Paris, 1937) 268.

[35] *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga* (New York: Paragon House, 1990) 270.

[36] *Upadeśasāhasrī* II.1.2. Mayeda translation (see note 3) 211. See also BṛUpBh III.5.1

[37] BrSūBh III.4.35.

[38] BrSūBh III.4.50. Thibaut transl. II:326 with slight variation.

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eligible to experience the grace of liberation and Self-realization, since he alone has cleared away all the obstacles and impediments to its reception, by having first extricated himself from all worldly ties.

The second way of thinking the relation between divine grace and human effort is not in contradiction to what has been said. Here, too, effort is absolutely necessary and its culmination, enlightenment, is likewise a gracious dispensation of the Lord. But whereas in the first model stress is laid on the efficacy of the seeker's purification of mind and heart, in the second we get a stronger sense of the divine sovereignty to respond. In the first instance we discovered the soul availing itself of an already offered divine grace. In the second instance we find passages in which Śaṃkara emphasizes the Lord actively rewarding the effort of the devoteee. For instance, already in regard to the law of *karma*, Śaṃkara teaches that in responding to the soul's actions the Lord dispenses the results of those actions not only according to merit, but also according to grace (*anugraha*).[39] Elsewhere Śaṃkara declares that the Great Lord (*maheśvara*) is not compelled to act graciously towards the creatures; rather this Lord "has independence in the matter of favouring or disfavouring all, since He is the Lord of all."[40]

This free action toward the soul extends to the revelation of the Self. There are a number of passages in Śaṃkara's works that speak of the supreme "becoming gracious" (*prasīdati*) in response to the *sādhaka's* devotional practices, one example of which is devout meditation on the Lord. But Śaṃkara not only names the Lord (*īśvara*) who "becomes gracious" (*prasīdati*),[41] but also the higher *brahman*,[42] and even the supreme Self.[43] Now in all but one of these passages (ChUpBh I.1.1) that speak of a free and gracious divine response it is striking how *Vaiṣṇavism* enters in. In these examples Śaṃkara either links grace to explicit *Vaiṣṇavite* devotional methods or else equates *brahman-ātman-īśvara* with *Viṣṇu*. In a quite different passage Śaṃkara gives us a clue as to the divine intent. In BrSūBh I.1.20, after describing how *īśvara* miraculously assumes bodily forms through the power

[39] KaUpBh II.2.13. *sa sarvajñaḥ sarveśvaraḥ kāmināṃ saṃsāriṇāṃ karmānurūpaṃ kāmānkarmaphālani svānugrahanimittaśca.* TPU, 96, lines 8–9.

[40] AiUpBh I.3.1. Transl. EU II:34. *maheśvarasyāpi sarveśvaratvātsarvānprati nigrahe'nugrahe ca svātantryameva.* TPU 335, lines 2–3.

[41] BrSūBh I.2.7.

[42] BṛUpBh V.1.1; PrUpBh V.2.

[43] ChUpBh I.1.1; KaUpBh II.3.13.

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of *māyā* (an indication of probable *Vaiṣṇavite* theology), he notes that the Lord does this in order to "gratify thereby his devout worshippers."[44] There are many other instances in which Śaṃkara makes reference to *Viṣṇu* or *Vaiṣṇavite* worship.[45] In BrSūBh IV.3.10 Śaṃkara equates knowledge of the supreme Self with the highest state of *Viṣṇu*.[46]

It appears, then, that Śaṃkara's thinking on grace is indebted to both the demands of a correct rational theology (a theology that nonetheless has its material origin in sacred scripture) as well as to *Vaiṣṇavite* practice and reflection. The first source or method appears to express itself in terms of divine justice, impartiality, even passivity, while the *Vaiṣṇavite* influence is responsible for the affirmation of a more personalistic and active divine response and of a mercy that exceeds the mere demands of karmic justice. How the two approaches to grace refer to the single activity of one and the same Lord Śaṃkara does not say. The two conceptions remain in tension with one another.

At the very minimum, however, one may recognize the following: The Lord is never partial or unfair when dealing with the soul, and he is sure to administer, at the very least, what creaturely merit demands according to the standard of justice that *īśvara* himself has established. In addition to this, the Lord, who is sovereign over the law of cosmic retribution and is generous by nature, is free to exceed the strict demands of justice and may respond with an unmerited mercy and generosity. Those to whom the Lord tends to grant such a bountiful display of mercy, moreover, are those who are his true devotees, those renunciates who seek liberation to the exclusion of every other desire. What the Lord, perhaps finally out of pity (*anukrośaṃ*), grants to the suffering and yearning devotee is liberation itself.[47]

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[44] Thibaut I:80:*sādhakānugrahārtham*. MB 45, lines 17–18.

[45] E.g., BrSūBh I.2.12, I.2.14, I.3.14, I.4.1, III.3.9, IV.1.3, IV.1.5, IV.3.10 etc.

[46] *paraṃ pariśuddhaṃ viṣṇoḥ paramaṃ padaṃ*. MB 496, line 6.

[47] Cf. BhGBh VII. 23. *Anukrośaṃ*, "tenderness, compassion" (Monier-Williams 31, col. 3), is a term not used anywhere in the Gītā, whereas Śaṃkara employs it three times in his Gītā-commentary: VII.13, VII.23, XV.10.

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ŚAṂKARA IN EAST AND WEST TODAY

Anthony J. Alston

Swami Satchidanandendra of Holenarsipur, Hassan District, South India died in 1975 at the age of over ninety. He was a most prolific author in Sanskrit, Kannada and English. His message was aggressively stated in a Sanskrit work, written in 1922 and published in 1929, called *The Refutation of Root Ignorance* or *Mūlāvidyā Nirāsaḥ*, subtitled *The Heart of Śrī Śaṃkara*. His conviction was that Gauḍapāda, Śaṃkara and Sureśvara, basing themselves on earlier tradition, had taught a common doctrine for interpreting the Upaniṣads, that had gradually become more and more distorted by their successors in the Advaita Vedānta fold. Towards the end of his life he wrote a long Sanskrit work dealing with the same topic in more detail, the *Vedānta Prakriyā Pratyabhijñā*. It is proposed here to bring out a few of the points made in that work, using the present writer's translation, entitled *The Method of the Vedanta*. The material will be brought under five headings, *Vedic Revelation, Theological Method, Ignorance, Theories of the Soul* and *Liberation*, of which the last two refer to brief notes only. This will be followed by a résumé of some points made by the German scholar, the late Paul Hacker, in the earlier period of his work on Śaṃkara, 1950–1953.

Vedic Revelation

The work called *The Method of the Vedanta* does not present itself as a piece of free philosophy. Its aim is to elucidate the method of teaching which the author thinks predominates in the metaphysical parts of the Upaniṣads, *Gītā* and *Brahma Sūtras*, as interpreted by Śaṃkara. He thinks that this method was adhered to by Gauḍapāda and others before Śaṃkara, and that it was preserved amongst Śaṃkara's followers only by Sureśvara. The essence of the method is to regard the metaphysical teaching of the Upaniṣads as having been expressed through false attribution (*adhyāropa*) followed by subsequent denial (*apavāda*). But we may begin here with some preliminary enquiries which raise the question, "In what sense are the

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metaphysical texts of the Upaniṣads and kindred traditional literature to be regarded as revelation?"

It is common ground amongst all Advaita Vedantins that the ordinary human being is unaware of the true nature of his own Self, suffers on that account and may be relieved of that suffering through the texts of the Upaniṣads as administered by a Teacher who has himself awoken to the true nature of his Self with their help. But if the hearer is not yet aware of the true nature of his Self, how can he be apprised of it through words, which can only be intelligible to him in terms of what he knows already? Śaṃkara's contemporary, Maṇḍana Miśra, raises this question, and answers it by saying that we have a general notion, for instance, of the concept "cause", and this concept can be expressed in sentences that narrow down the notion of cause to a particular meaning in which it is raised above the realm of ordinary experience. A text like "That from which these creatures are born" is a case in point.[1]

This conception, our author claims,[2] does not agree with Śaṃkara's standpoint. The latter could not allow that the creation texts were descriptions of an historical fact,[3] or that their purpose, in the last resort, was to represent the Absolute as a cause. Thus he quotes Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā* 3.15, "Whenever creation is mentioned in the Veda and taught in various different ways, through such examples as clay, iron or sparks, this is only a device for the introduction (of the doctrine of the sole metaphysical reality of the Self)." The Self is not a universal or a particular, and so not a particular kind of cause. It is not either a cause or an effect at all. Since mind and speech cannot attain to it, it is not the meaning of any sentence. So much was clear to Maṇḍana, but he did not see that a sentence can confer immediate knowledge of that which is beyond the *direct* meaning of any sentence if its words are taken in an *indirect* meaning.[4] The author of the *Pañcapādikā* copied Maṇḍana, and spoke of the words of the Veda as particularizing the general knowledge we have of the existence of a world-creator by specifying omniscience and

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[1] TaiUp III.1; *Brahmasiddhi*, ed. S. Kuppuswami Shastri (Madras: Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, 1937), p. 157.

[2] MV (= Satchidananendra Sarasvati, *The Method of the Vedanta*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1989) pp. 281 f.

[3] BrSūBh 4.3.14.

[4] MV pp. 281 f.

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other particular attributes.[5] A point to which neither Maṇḍana nor the *Pañcapādikā* paid sufficient attention, according to the author of *The Method of the Vedanta* (MV), is that, in regard to the Self, the Veda is only genuine revelation if it leads to the direct apprehension of the Self in its true nature. Unlike the rewards in heaven promised by the ritualists, the reward of knowledge of the Absolute is something immediately evident in this life.[6] So MV can say, "We do not accept the Vedic texts to be authoritative just because they are Vedic texts. They are accepted as authoritative because doubt and wrong knowledge and so forth are impossible in the Self as immediate experience."[7]

This failure to appreciate the importance of immediate experience as the crowning element in revelation is also responsible for another fallacy common amongst the later authors of the Advaita Vedānta school, from Maṇḍana onwards. They try to establish the existence of the pure non-dual Self by negative dialectic. Characteristic in this respect is the work of Vimuktātman. He begins his *Iṣṭa Siddhi* by saying, "I bow to that principle of immediate experience. . . ." But he seems to forget what he has said. For he then goes off on a long course of negative dialectic, supplying apagogic arguments in favour of the principle, trying to demonstrate that any view that contradicted it would have to be contradictory. But if a principle is self-established and self-revealed, how can there be any doubt about it? And if there was, in what way could negative dialectic lead a doubter to knowledge of truth? It would merely implant new doubts in his mind. How can negative logic establish immediate experience, when it depends on immediate experience for its own existence? The point has been made by Sureśvara, "The logicians bemuse each other with a web of wherefores and therefores, heavily afflicted with the fever of debate. But it is to this experience that they make their final appeal."[8] Similarly, the opinion of Śaṃkara was, "Only those arguments that are sanctioned by the Veda may be resorted to, and that only as an auxiliary to the attainment of direct experience"[9] and "Trains of reasoning where the premises are not based on Vedic

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[5] *Pañcapādikā*, ed. S. Srirama Sastri and S. R. Krishnamurthi Sastri (Madras: Government Oriental Series, 1958) pp. 96–97, MV p. 445.
[6] BrSūBh 3.3.32.
[7] MV p. 323.
[8] *Naiṣkarmya Siddhi* 2.59, quoted MV p. 651.
[9] BrSūBh 2.1.6, quoted MV p. 651.

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revelation, but on mere human speculation, are without any sound foundation."[10]

Maṇḍana held that words standing in a sentence could only convey a meaning that was a synthesis of a manifold.[11] This synthetic and abstract knowledge had to be converted into concrete intuition by the later exertions of the student in repeated affirmation, meditation and ritual. Maṇḍana draws the consequence of his view at the end of his *Brahma Siddhi*, "For once the Absolute has been known through the words of the Veda, one wishes to engage in action for the sake of immediate apprehension."[12]

Against this view, current in his day, Śaṃkara maintained that if a text did not give rise to concrete experience the first time it was heard (i.e., if the hearer was not sufficiently disciplined and sensitive to comprehend it in concrete intuition) it was impossible that it should do so merely by being repeatedly affirmed.[13] According to Śaṃkara, ascetic discipline, meditation and so forth were a preliminary discipline for the purpose of coming to understand the meaning of the *words* of the supreme texts. One cannot, for instance, understand the meaning of the word "inmost" (*pratyañc*), used in the phrase "inmost Self," without disciplining the mind and restraining it from prowling over the wide field of objects.[14] But the view championed by Maṇḍana came to be widely held even amongst those who professed to be following Śaṃkara. It was promoted, for instance, by Vācaspati Miśra, who held that the upanishadic texts communicated abstract knowledge that was only converted into immediate intuition through pondering and sustained meditation, and attributed this view to Śaṃkara himself.[15] Śaṃkara, however, could not allow that the final metaphysical knowledge could come through any action, such as meditation. As such, it would have been an event occurring at a moment in time, and consequently having a beginning and an end. His conception of liberation was rather as an awakening to the fact that individuality, action and time themselves are illusory. He says, "Liberation is said figuratively to be a result. . . . But ignorance cannot be brought to an end by any form of action. . . . For

[10] BrSūBh 2.1.11, MV p. 63.
[11] MV p. 187.
[12] *Brahmasiddhi*, p. 159.
[13] BrSūBh 4.1.2, quoted MV p. 189.
[14] BrSūBh 4.1.2, quoted MV p. 644.
[15] Bhāmatī 4.1.2, quoted MV p. 645.

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liberation is eternal, and nothing other than the true nature of the seeker himself."[16]

Śaṃkara did not believe that there was anything to be gained from the dialectical refutation of the possibility of difference. A characteristic argument of this kind would be: "No difference of any kind can touch a reality. For if the difference be taken either as different from the reality that is supposed to be different, or as both different and non-different from it, then this will imply a new difference, and the new difference will imply a further difference and so on to infinity in vicious regress."[17] This abstract form of negative dialectic comes out of the air and leads nowhere. It is quite different from the "*āvīta nyāya*," used, according to Śaṃkara, in the fourth Book of Gauḍapāda's *Kārikās* to refute opponents' views by exposing their mutually conflicting character. The urge towards other forms of negative dialectic arises from the failure to remember that each means of knowledge has its own separate province. Perception, for instance, and inference based upon it, are turned outwards towards the external. The perception of plurality cannot affect the non-duality taught by the Upaniṣads, because the latter is revealed only by an inward-looking vision. Referring to Maṇḍana, Sureśvara remarks, "But there are some who imagine themselves to be great pundits and claim that all the different means of knowledge conflict mutually, and so contradict the doctrine that reality is the identity of all as the one Self."[18] Maṇḍana argued that perception was a weaker authority than the Veda because it was of merely human origin.[19] For Śaṃkara, when the Self is known, the authoritativeness of all authoritative means of knowledge comes to an end.[20] Śaṃkara's doctrine that all the empirical means of knowledge were flawed because they depended on the self-contradictory identification of the Self with the not-self was not his personal invention, for he is able to quote an earlier authority, usually held to be Sundara Pāṇḍya, with a similar view. "Just as the notion of the identity of the body with the Self is imagined to be valid

[16] BṛUpBh 3.3.1, intro., quoted MV p. 159.
[17] Vimuktātman, *Iṣṭa Siddhi*, ed. M. Hiriyanna (Baroda: Government Oriental Series, 1933) p. 23, quoted MV pp. 654 f.
[18] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Bhāṣya Vārtika* (= BBV) 2.1.588, quoted MV p. 330.
[19] *Brahmasiddhi* p. 40, MV p. 275.
[20] BṛUpBh 1.4.7, MV p. 186.

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knowledge, so worldly empirical knowledge itself is imagined to be valid knowledge until the true nature of the Self has been realized."[21]

Theological Method

It is maintained in the MV that the essential theological method to which Gauḍapāda, Śaṃkara and Sureśvara adhered was to interpret the highest texts of the Upaniṣads in terms of false attribution followed by retraction. The retraction could occur either in the form of purely negative texts or by positive teaching that implied a negation of what went before. We have just seen that the low estimate of the validity of empirical knowledge that was typical of Śaṃkara was an inherited tradition for which he could quote earlier authority, and the same is true of his interpretation of the highest upanishadic texts as cases of false attribution followed by retraction. For he quoted "the knowers of the tradition" as saying, "that which has no plurality is communicated through false attribution followed by retraction."[22] Gauḍapāda may be claimed to have considered that the Upaniṣads used this method, at any rate in places. For he says, "The text denies all that it had previously taught by saying 'He (the Self) is neither this nor that.'"[23]

A passage to which MV refers[24] illustrates how successive phrases in an Upanishad may be regarded as negating and correcting what went before. The text[25] mentions "the Absolute that is immediate and direct." Because all the words are in the same grammatical case, we know that they qualify one another. "Immediate" (*sākṣād*) means "immediately perceptible on account of proximity." But it implies perception through a sense organ (*sa* + *akṣa* = "with organ of cognition"). To negate this idea, the text adds "*aparokṣād*," here meaning "immediate." Sureśvara says that this is a negative expression because it begins with a privative "a." As no words in the Veda can be deemed useless, it must carry the idea of immediacy further than "immediate perception through a sense organ," which implies duality. So it is taken by Sureśvara as intended to eliminate the distinctions

[21] Quoted at BrSūBh 1.1.4 *ad fin.*, MV p. 438.
[22] BhGBh 13.13, MV p. 4.
[23] BṛUp. 2.3.6, GK 3.26, MV p. 84.
[24] Sureśvara, BBV 3.4.11–20, MV p. 344.
[25] BṛUp 3.4.1.

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implied by the division between knower, knowledge and known. When this triad has been eliminated, what remains over is the Absolute itself as inactive witness. But if it is a witness, will not this imply duality? Yes, but the Absolute is not ultimately a witness. For the text as a whole reads, "The immediately and directly known Absolute." The force of the last word, "the Absolute," is to eliminate the notion of witnesshood. The Absolute is the sole reality, neither transcendent nor immanent, for it has nothing to transcend and nothing else in which to abide.

Thus for Gauḍapāda, Śaṃkara and Sureśvara all conceptions of the Absolute fell short, and the chief task of the commentator on the Upaniṣads is to interpret them in such a way as to bring this out. Even such an apparently affirmative text as "That thou art" is to be interpreted as a negation. The only purpose of the text "That thou art," says Śaṃkara, is to remove such superimpositions onto the pure Self as pain, bondage and liberation.[26] And he quoted the maxim of the earlier author, Draviḍācārya, "the validity of the Veda stems from the fact that its function is to negate."[27] According to the learned author Pundit Lakṣmīpuram Śrīnivāsācār,[28] the principle goes back to the grammarian Vararuci, and its application was extended by Draviḍa. As the grammarian corrects speech errors, so the Vedāntin corrects error in general.

Even lip-service was rarely paid in post-Śaṃkara Advaita to the maxim of "false attribution followed by retraction." Advaita gradually changed from a mystical theology into a kind of independent philosophy. The later writers no longer regarded themselves as primarily interpreters of the upanishadic texts. It became more a matter of putting on the armour of cosmological theories and entering the lists to do battle with the Logicians and the Dualistic Vedāntins, foraging about amidst the upanishadic texts only for support for one's own theories. Eventually the time came when the Upaniṣads had been so far forgotten that it was considered, by Ānandabodha for instance, that the methods of the Logicians were enough to establish the nature of the real.[29]

Citsukha, for his part, tries to prove the self-luminosity of the Self,

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[26] KenaUp (Vākya) Bh 1.3.
[27] GK 2.32, MV p. 65.
[28] *Darśanodaya* (Government Press: Mysore, 1933) p. 124.
[29] MV p. 850.

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which cannot in fact be proved, and can only be known through direct experience.[30] Texts of the Veda are quoted, when quoted at all, as if their only purpose was to reveal his opponents' theories to be erroneous, and his own to be correct in the context of a logical debate.[31] For Śaṃkara, knowledge of the Absolute (*brahma-vidyā*) does not depend on any "means of knowledge," not even on the Veda, let alone the proofs of reason. The Self is self-established (*svataḥ-siddha*). The Veda merely serves to eliminate superimposition.[32]

Ignorance

In his well-known introduction to his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*, Śaṃkara maintains that worldly experience is vitiated at source because it depends on the identification of the Self and the not-self. This superimposition thus defined, he say, is "ignorance" (*avidyā*). And he claims that "one thing taken for another" will cover the view of error of all schools. For even the ritualists, who would like to explain error away as mere absence of knowledge—mere *failure* to distinguish between a perception and a memory—are obliged to admit the presence of a positive cognition even in that wrong perception of non-difference.[33]

Since time and causation are themselves regarded as superimpositions on the Self, superimposition cannot have a beginning or an end in time, or a cause. Hence it is called by Śaṃkara "natural."[34] Absence of knowledge is a pre-requisite in time for any particular superimposition; for superimposition as a whole we can only call absence of knowledge a *logical* pre-requisite—we cannot conceive of superimposition except as preceded by absence of knowledge, although time and precedence in time along with it fall within superimposition.[35]

Superimpositions are illusions. From the standpoint of the highest truth they never occurred even as illusions, and are consequently never cancelled. False attribution and subsequent negation themselves have significance only within the realm of ignorance. "Had anything

[30] MV p. 917.
[31] MV p. 917.
[32] BhGBh 2.18.
[33] MV p. 270.
[34] BrSūBh 1.1.1, intro., MV p. 115.
[35] MV p. 313.

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actually been imagined, that imagination could have been brought to an end."[36] But when the teaching is accommodated to the pupil's understanding and experience, it is accepted, from that standpoint, that imagination takes place. This imagination is illustrated from the standard scholastic examples of an illusion, the rope mistaken for a snake, the shell (mother-of-pearl) mistaken for silver. For Śaṃkara, when a shell is mistaken for silver, "One merely imagines silver, although there is in fact no silver there."[37] The image of illusory silver is used by Śaṃkara to illustrate the total unreality of the world. As there is no silver in the shell, so no universe of plurality exists in the Self.[38] Śaṃkara is specific on the point that the illusory rope-snake and the illusory silver are not objects, but at best mental fantasies, mere misreadings of the rope and shell. And the same is true, for him, of duality in general, which is not different from the rope-snake in point of being a mere mental phenomenon.[39]

It is noteworthy that, in so far as Śaṃkara and Sureśvara identified ignorance with superimposition, they were able to retain the old upanishadic doctrine that in dreamless sleep there is perfect identity with the Absolute and no ignorance. "The soul then stands as the Self or Absolute, and is not the transmigrating individual."[40] In their doctrine as represented in the MV, all plurality is reduced to superimposition. If some ancient texts speak of the world as "*māyā*," this *māyā* is the product of superimposition, not *vice versa*. For causation falls within superimposition, and we have already seen that the latter is specifically said to have been without a cause. "*Māyā*" for Śaṃkara is name and form in their unmanifest state, and ignorance or superimposition is what sets it up.[41]

In later times the doctrine was changed. Śaṃkara had spoken of a fundamental superimposition of the Self and its attributes onto the not-self and of the not-self and its attributes onto the Self, which makes worldly experience possible. The *Pañcapādikā*, while purporting to explain these phrases, radically alters them. In Śaṃkara's writings, "wrong knowledge" (*mithyā-jñāna*), is a synonym for *avidyā* or ignorance, and "*mithyā*," translated in the context as "wrong," means

[36] GK 1.18, MV p. 709.
[37] BrSūBh 4.1.5, MV p. 115.
[38] MV p. 271.
[39] GKBh 2.32, MV p. 81.
[40] Sureśvara, BBV 2.1.259, with Ānandagiri's gloss, MV p. 237.
[41] BrSūBh 2.1.14, MV p. 405 f., and 772.

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not only that the cognition was false in the sense of wrong, but also that it was itself unreal, in the sense that it belonged to the realm of duality, and when the final truth is known it will also be known that the realm of duality never existed. The *Pañcapādikā* explains *mithyā* as meaning "indeterminable as real or unreal," a formula found in Śaṃkara's contemporary Maṇḍana Miśra, but not in the works of Śaṃkara himself, if the commentaries on classical works and the text of the *Upadeśa Sāhasrī* are taken as the criterion of authenticity, as they are by the author of MV. And the *Pañcapādikā* then takes advantage of an ambiguity in the orthography of the *devanāgarī* script to change "*jñāna*" into "*ajñāna*," and so to speak of a "non-conscious power," the power of nescience (*avidyā-śakti*). And whereas Śaṃkara had said that worldly experience had this superimposition, which is "ignorance" (*avidyā*), for its "efficient cause" (*nimitta*), the *Pañcapādikā* alters this and says that the power of ignorance is the "material cause" (*upādāna*) of worldly experience.

For Śaṃkara, all powers (*śakti*) were illusions set up by ignorance in the form of superimposition:[42] for many amongst his followers, the cosmic power of ignorance, so far from being caused by superimposition, was itself the cause of superimposition.[43] This power which causes superimposition cannot itself be a superimposition. Is it then real? A new assumption is then made to get out of the difficulty, and it is declared to be "indeterminable as real or as unreal." The argument arises thus. The Upaniṣads are part of the Veda, no text in which can be useless. Provision must therefore be made for those texts which deny the reality of the world of plurality. Nevertheless, some significance must be given to the world of plurality, both because it is revealed in perception and also because there must be some valid motivation for turning to the Upaniṣads, namely the experience of pain. If we deny the existence of pain, we deny significance to the Upaniṣads, which exist to remove pain once and for all. So for these reasons we cannot say that the world is unreal. On the other hand, we cannot say that it is real, as that would contradict the main content of the upanishadic teaching. But how can we claim that the world is neither real nor unreal, surely an illogical proposition? Well, but what is a matter of universal experience triumphs over logic. And it is a fact of universal experience that there are

[42] BrSūBh 2.1.31, MV p. 685.
[43] *Pañcapādikā* p. 62, MV p. 454.

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entities that are indeterminable as real or unreal, namely common sense-illusions, such illusions being subject to cancellation through knowledge of their substrata. Justice is thus done both to empirical experience and to the upanishadic metaphysical teaching. If the world had been unreal it could never have impinged on our experience at all: if it had been real, it could never be eliminated, and the upanishadic teaching would have been useless.[44]

In his examination of this theory, the author of the MV points out that for Śaṃkara and Sureśvara and for the author of the *Bhagavad Gītā* it is not ignorance or Māyā that is indeterminable as real or unreal, but rather the Absolute, because the latter transcends human powers of judgement. "All reference to real and unreal occurs within the realm of ignorance only." The final metaphysical principle is without any distinctions whatever, and can only be communicated by the upanishadic texts through the negation of what is foreign to it.[45] As we have already seen above, Śaṃkara's purpose in resorting to the examples of rope-snake and shell-silver was not to advance instances to show that entities of an indeterminable reality-grade *existed*, and so could be used to explain the world-illusion, as being of a similar kind: his purpose, rather, was to illustrate how the world-illusion, like the illusory snake and silver, *had no existence whatever*. To quote Śaṃkara's use of another such simile: "The water and other features of a mirage are nothing over and above the stretch of desert on which they appear, since their existence is exhausted in their being seen, and they are inexplicable (i.e. totally inexplicable). In the same way, it should be seen that this world of experiencers and experienced objects is nothing over and above the Absolute."[46]

In some passages, Śaṃkara speaks of name and form in their unmanifest state before the projection of the world at the beginning of the world-period and calls them indeterminable either as the Absolute or as anything different. The same point holds good of name and form in their manifest condition as the world of plurality.[47] Thus plurality, for Śaṃkara, derives from name and form, which, in turn, are set up by ignorance. They are "imagined through ignorance," which is not at all the same thing as saying that they have igno-

[44] *Brahmasiddhi* p. 9, MV p. 263.
[45] MV p. 264, cp. BhG 13.12.
[46] BrSūBh 2.1.14, MV p. 118.
[47] BrSūBh 2.1.27, MV p. 118.

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rance for their material cause. Name and form have no existence separate from the Absolute, as pots and jars have no existence separate from the clay. In so far, then, as name and form are manifest from the standpoint of ignorance, they are indeterminable as identical with the Absolute or different. And that is as far as Śaṃkara and the author of the MV go. They do not speak of ignorance as having any specific reality-grade.

In post-Śaṃkara Advaita, on the other hand, ignorance was regularly taken as having the specific reality-grade "neither real nor unreal", and this constituted a step towards granting it reality. When the concept of indeterminability came to be precisely formulated by the later authors, the Self came to be defined as determinable and so subject to imprisonment within a mental concept. Thus Ānandabodha writes: "Others say that the indeterminable is that form of being which is subject to cancellation. This definition does not extend too far, as items such as the Self that are determinable (as real) are not subject to cancellation."[48] As the author of the MV observes here, Ānandabodha accepts shell-silver and the like as "entities" of indeterminable reality-grade, existing separately from the shell, and serving as examples to illustrate the world-process. And he adds, "But this must be wrong, as it contradicts common experience, expressed in Śrī Śaṃkara's words 'For shell appears as silver.'"

Convinced that ignorance and the world were neither real nor unreal, and conceiving the Absolute as a kind of object whose existence they were determined to prove against all comers, the later Advaita authors tended to forget how the ancient texts had taught that the Absolute transcended all human concepts. *Bhagavad Gītā* 13.12 and other ancient texts say that the Absolute cannot be called either real or unreal. This feeling for the transcendence of the Absolute is still retained in Sureśvara, who says: "This Self is by nature beyond existence and non-existence, so it can be known only from the holy texts."[49] For Śaṃkara, too, the Self "is not the object of any notion such as 'existent' or 'non-existent.'"[50] Commenting on the famous text from the *Taittirīya Upanishad* 2.2.1, "The Absolute is Reality, Knowledge and Infinite," he says that the presence of the terms "knowledge" and "infinite" as qualifying factors negates the direct

[48] *Ṇyāya Makaranda* (Benares C.S.S., 1907) pp. 124–125, MV p. 866.
[49] *Ṇaiṣkarmya Siddhi* 3.57.
[50] KaUpBh 2.3.13, MV p. 720.

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meaning of "*satya*" as "real," and leaves the mere negation "other than unreal." Here again, it is the Absolute, and not either ignorance or the world, that is conceived by Śaṃkara as neither real nor unreal. On the contrary, the world of name and form is regarded as both real and unreal, depending in the standpoint from which it is viewed. It is real as viewed from the standpoint of ignorance; it is totally unreal from the standpoint of enlightenment.[51] This is the way in which Śaṃkara hopes to do justice to perceptual experience, while safeguarding the upanishadic doctrine of non-duality.

For the post-Śaṃkara authors, the Absolute was stamped as real, and ignorance and its effects, the world of multiplicity, were interpreted as indeterminable as real or unreal. But if ignorance and its effects are indeterminable as unreal, how can they be removed by knowledge? The later authors point to the example of common visual errors, the rope-snake and the shell-silver. For Śaṃkara, we have seen, these were examples of things that did *not* exist. Even so far as they appeared to exist, they were a mere piece of mental imagination. No snake ever arose from the rope or dissolved back into it.[52] But the later authors, for whom ignorance and its products were something more substantial, required to interpret the illustration of the rope-snake and shell-silver differently.

Already the *Pañcapādikā* sometimes speaks of the silver as if it were a kind of object residing in the shell. It says that it is quite intelligible that an erroneous cognition "should have false silver residing in the shell as its object." Such a cognition is "false knowledge" because its object is false (in that we later have the cancelling cognition "this never was silver").[53] Vimuktātman speaks more definitely of the shell-silver as an object of which there is a cognition. He did not believe that an error could be anything known afterwards never to have existed. Correction of error is admitted as a fact, so there must have been something to correct.[54] What has been corrected cannot have been unreal, or it could not have been the object of an act of correction. But it cannot have been real either, or it could not have been corrected.[55] If a cognition occurs and yet is subject to dissolution through correction, it is indeterminable as real or

[51] MV p. 80.
[52] GKBh 2.32.
[53] *Pañcapādikā* p. 54, MV p. 399.
[54] *Iṣṭa Siddhi* 1.9, MV p. 666.
[55] *Iṣṭa Siddhi* p. 47, MV p. 667.

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unreal. But cognitions must have objects, and indeterminable cognitions will have indeterminable objects. So shell-silver exists with a reality-grade that is indeterminable as real or unreal. The indeterminable cognition and its indeterminable object are transient, and therefore presuppose a material cause, which demands the hypothesis of an indeterminable root-ignorance. On this the author of the MV comments: "Objects of erroneous cognition are not realities, that an enquiry into their cause would be meaningful or useful. As for the mental imagination itself, one could not imagine any cause for it apart from those on the mental plane, such as absence of discrimination of the true nature of the real, and the impressions of the previous experience of other objects."[56]

For Vācaspati, "the superimposition is something merely seen, not an existent reality,"[57] and he does not speak of an extra-mental false snake. Prakāśātman, for his part, gives alternative explanations of Śaṃkara's words about superimposition at the beginning of the latter's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*. According to the first one, the superimposition would be a thing and not a mere idea.[58] The author of the MV comments that it is only knowledge and not things that can be eliminated by right knowledge, so that the theory implies the existence of plurality, against the texts of the Upaniṣads that teach non-duality.

In a later passage the *Vivaraṇa* of Prakāśātman makes an opponent say that, on the doctrine of the *Pañcapādikā*, ignorance undergoes two illusory transformations under the influence of defects in the object, one into the form of false silver, and the other into the form of an appearance (*ābhāsa*) of a cognition determined by that false silver, the latter regarded as an extra-mental object. In the course of replying, the author of the *Vivaraṇa* makes the *Pañcapādikā* say "The form and nature of the final resultant-cognition is conditioned by the object, not by the cognitive processes that contribute."[59] So, generally speaking, in post-Śaṃkara Advaita a perceptual illusion was regarded not merely as a false notion but as a false notion *conditioned by a false external object*.

The *Vivaraṇa* follows the *Iṣṭa Siddhi* in not regarding the mere

[56] MV p. 670.
[57] *Bhāmatī* 1.1.1, p. 18, MV p. 553.
[58] *Pañcapādikā-Vivaraṇa* (= *Vivaraṇa*), ed. Srirama Sastri and Krishnamurthi Sastri (Madras 1958) p. 127, MV p. 799.
[59] *Vivaraṇa* p. 156, MV p. 801.

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absence of discrimination spoken of by Śaṃkara and Sureśvara as a sufficient precondition to account for superimposition; the latter is an objective entity and transient, and therefore presupposes a more permanent material cause in which it "inheres"; this latter must be a positive something, not a mere absence of discrimination. So we are obliged to assume the existence of ignorance as a cosmic power. Since nothing had been said in the Upaniṣads about ignorance as a cosmological power, and it is not evident to us as such in ordinary experience, ways had to be found for showing that it was at least *implied* by some features of ordinary experience. For this purpose, the later authors turned to dreamless sleep. Śaṃkara, who thought of ignorance as superimposition, had been happy to agree with the doctrine of the oldest Upaniṣads, where the teaching in some places implies that ignorance is absent in dreamless sleep. For the *Vivaraṇa*, on the contrary, a consideration of dreamless sleep forces us to assume the existence of an "entity" called ignorance with a power of impeding manifestation—one that exists over and above the mere non-perception, erroneous cognition and doubt with which Śaṃkara and Sureśvara had been content to catalogue the contents of ignorance.[60] In commenting on this the MV remarks that the idea that in dreamless sleep the Absolute is hidden is a notion peculiar to the waking state, arising, like all the ideas of the waking state, through superimposition. No one feels in dreamless sleep "I do not know". The ancient texts like *Chāndogya Upanishad* 6.8.1, which proclaim that in dreamless sleep we are one with the Absolute, can very well be explained on the basis that our own true nature then shines unhindered, but that we are without the factors required for individualized knowledge.[61]

The *Vivaraṇa* teaches that in dreamless sleep the mind "dissolves into its material cause, ignorance,"[62] and this has become the standard Advaita view. But it was not the view of Śaṃkara. The view of the latter was, "Being united with pure Being in that state (dreamless sleep), it is but right that the soul should have no subject-object cognition (*vijñāna*), for, as the Veda puts it, 'What can one [then] see with what?'"[63] The state of dreamless sleep, which for Śaṃkara

[60] *Vivaraṇa* pp. 107 f., MV p. 759.
[61] MV pp. 760 f.
[62] *Vivaraṇa* p. 218, MV p. 770.
[63] BrSūBh 3.2.7.

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was a foretaste of liberation, became for the later authors a proof of the existence of ignorance as an obscuring and deluding power, existing over and above the wrong knowledge, absence of knowledge and doubt established by Śaṃkara on the basis of experience as exhausting the total content of ignorance. Faced no doubt with opponents who claimed that there was no evidence in the classical Upaniṣads on which Śaṃkara commented for a cosmic power called ignorance, the author of the *Vivaraṇa* tried to show that we have "valid cognition" of such a power of ignorance as a result of reflecting over our experience of knowing no objects in dreamless sleep.[64] From the standpoint of the author of the MV, the *Vivaraṇa* pays insufficient attention to the warning of Sureśvara that anyone trying to establish the existence of ignorance by means of valid cognition was like one searching for darkness in the depths of a cave with a lamp.[65]

The Reflection Theory of the Soul

The results of reifying ignorance and its effects, and according them a certain degree of reality, ramify through all later Advaita theory and differentiate it from Śaṃkara's teaching. Two examples may here suffice. In the theory of the constitution of the individual soul, two schools were later established, one which claimed that the soul was primarily a 'delimitation' (*avaccheda*) of the Absolute, conceived on the analogy of the illusory delimitation of space by pots, and the other which stressed the status of the soul as a 'reflection' (*pratibimba, ābhāsa*) of the Absolute. From the standpoint of the MV, if Śaṃkara spoke of the soul as a reflection, this was only in the course of false attribution and later retraction. Although, in the last resort, the Self and the mind are not related, to speak of a reflection of the Self in the mind is useful in the preliminary stages of instruction, since it affords some sort of an explanation of practical experience, for which the Sāṃkhyas and Buddhists of Śaṃkara's day, who did not appeal to the idea of such a reflection, could give no coherent account. But this does not imply that Śaṃkara thought that the soul *was* a reflection, and regarded this as a dogma that had to be defended though thick and thin. For when *Brahma Sūtra* 2.3.50

[64] *Vivaraṇa* p. 263, MV p. 783.
[65] *Taittirīyopaniṣad Bhāsya Vārtika* 2.177, MV p. 306.

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speaks of the soul as a "reflection," Śaṃkara reduces this to "like a reflection," and says that the appearance of a reflection is due to ignorance, and has to be removed. In the *Upadeśa Sāhasrī* he reduces a reflection to a total illusion: it cannot be located anywhere—either in the original or in the reflecting medium.[66]

The *Vivaraṇa*, however, takes the notion that the soul is a reflection much more seriously as a theory that has to be defended against "Avaccheda Vāda" and justified with an example. If the soul is regarded merely as a delimitation (*avaccheda*) of the Absolute, then the latter would have two contradictory forms in the same place at the same time, one limited and the other unlimited, which is impossible. But if one is armed with the reflection analogy, one can solve the difficulty by an appeal to common experience. For we have all apprehended the infinite ether of the sky reflected in water-pots. And here we have an example of how the same entity, the infinite ether, can be present in the same place, namely the water-pot, *both* as delimited (by the water-pot) *and also* as infinite (in the reflection).[67] The author of the MV deplores such theorizing. It is in no way based on practical experience. It leads to no useful result. Dialectic, which should only be used for harmonizing the Vedic texts or for refuting other schools, is used to introduce conflict within the Advaita school itself, and to no purpose.

Liberation

In view of the greater degree of reality accorded to the world by the general run of the later authors of the school, it is not surprising that their account of liberation should have been less elevated than that of Śaṃkara. For the *Vivaraṇa*, the liberated person is sometimes aware of his identity with the Self, but at other times he falls back from this into perception of duality, under the force of the merit and demerit which produced his present life.[68] He thus enjoys awareness of the Absolute only in special states. According to the MV, this contradicts the classical Advaita of Śaṃkara and Sureśvara, in which enlightenment implies realization of one's identity with the true Self permanently and in a way that excludes special states.

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[66] US 18.37.
[67] *Vivaraṇa* p. 289, MV p. 777.
[68] *Vivaraṇa* p. 786, MV p. 817.

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The theory of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī that realization of the Self before the death of the body is inferior to the realization of the Self that occurs on the death of the body, because the former is associated with the disturbance (*vikṣepa*) of mental activity,[69] also reflects, perhaps, the failure of the later authors to rise to the metaphysical insight enjoyed by Śaṃkara and Sureśvara. The view that total freedom from ignorance comes only with the death of the body goes back as early as the *Iṣṭa Siddhi* of Vimuktātman. The author of the MV regards it as a sign that liberation was to Vimuktātman only an idea that he had heard about in the Vedic texts, and was not a matter of direct experience to him.

Paul Hacker

Paul Hacker (1913–1980), Professor of Indology at the University of Münster, was trained in philological methods of enquiry by Willibald Kirfel, and part of his life's work was to apply these methods to the study of Śaṃkara and of the early members of his school. He thought that the first priority for the scientific appraisal of Śaṃkara's work was to separate the genuine from the numerous spurious works. To this end he subjected the speech uses of Śaṃkara's *Brahma Sūtra Commentary* to a minute examination, the results of which he expressed partly in tabular form. He selected a few terms of cardinal importance, *avidyā*, *māyā*, *nāma-rūpa* and *īśvara*, for special examination. He devoted another article to an examination of the doctrine of reality-grades, and wrote an important monograph on the introduction of the term '*vivarta*' into Advaita Vedanta after Śaṃkara's day. Our material here is taken mainly from these three works, written in the years 1950–1953. He contributed much more in later years, but confirmed that he still held to the results of his early work. The account here offered includes a little private amplification, and for an *exact* knowledge of Hacker's views the reader must go to his texts.

[69] *Advaita Siddhi*, ed. and Hindi transl. Yogīndrānanda. Varanasi: Saddarśana Prakāśana Pratiṣṭhāna, Vol. II p. 1284. See also Bombay Edition, ed. N. Anantakṛṣṇa Śāstrī, Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1937, p. 817.

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Avidyā

Hacker[70] accepted Śaṃkara's own definition of ignorance (*avidyā*) as "superimposition". Superimposition is the wrong identification of one thing with another. The basic superimposition on which all others depend is the wrong identification of the Self with the not-self, notably the wrong identification of the Self with the not-self in the form of the body, senses and mind that occurs in practical experience. The fundamental superimposition that makes individual experience possible is an identification of the real with the false. This conception differentiates Śaṃkara from the general run of his followers, for whom *avidyā* is a kind of "power" (*śakti*) and also the material from which erroneous conceptions are formed. For Śaṃkara, *avidyā* is wrong knowledge (*mithyā-jñāna*): for his followers it is the *cause* of wrong knowledge. For they conceive *avidyā* on the model of the *māyā* and *prakṛti* of the Epics, Purāṇas and Law Books, taking it as a kind of "thing", undergoing transformations (*pariṇāma*) to assume the form both of the objective world and the mental modifications with which we interpret it, including right empirical knowledge and error alike. Since Śaṃkara did not reify *avidyā* in this way, he can often speak of it, somewhat in the manner of the Yoga Śāstra, as one psychological defect amongst others (*avidyādi-doṣa*, *avidyādi-kleśa*), which his followers rarely did, as for them *avidyā* was primarily a kind of cosmological principle and the material cause of the whole objective world.[71] The term "*avidyādi*" in the later authors generally refers to *avidyā* and its effects.

Śāṃkara's typical use of the term *avidyā* and its synonyms (including *mithyā-jñāna*) is to say that, in the light of the metaphysical truth proclaimed in the Upaniṣads and "realized" by the successful student, if there is x or y or z in a person's experience (individuality, activity, suffering, mortality, bondage, plurality, name and form, individual cognition, correct or erroneous, etc.) then this must be due to *avidyā*, as without the fundamental contradiction of identifying the Self with the not-self there cannot be any individual experience at

[70] See *Kleine Schriften*, ed. L. Schmithausen (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978): "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śaṅkaras" and "Die Lehre von den Realitätsgraden im Advaita-Vedānta," and *Vivarta* (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1953). For translations, see Paul Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, ed. Wilhelm Halbfass (Albany: SUNY, 1995).

[71] *Kleine Schriften* p. 72.

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all. The phrases used for "due to *avidyā*" may imply a vague form of material causality (factors in our experience may be said to be "of the nature of *avidyā*" or to "have *avidyā* as their seed"), but very much more often some form of efficient causality is implied (factors in experience are "made by *avidyā*," "set up by *avidyā*" or "have *avidyā* for their efficient cause [*nimitta*]." Thus the form of causality exerted by *avidyā* to produce its effects does not tally exactly with any form of causality found within those effects, but is *sui generis*. Important to note is the fact that Śaṃkara nowhere speaks in the manner of his followers explicitly of *avidyā* as a material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*).

There are many other characteristics which Śaṃkara's later followers attribute to *avidyā* which he himself does not. He does not speak of it as "non-conscious" (*jaḍa*), as if it were a thing or a principle that could be so labelled. He does not call it "positive in form" (*bhāva-rūpa*). He does not credit it with the twin powers to hide and project (*āvaraṇa-śakti* and *vikṣepa-śakti*). He does not erect it into any kind of a cosmological or metaphysical principle. Whereas his followers saw *avidyā* as the cause of superimposition, Śaṃkara confined causality to the realm of superimposition, and spoke of the latter as "uncaused," "natural," "beginningless." Śaṃkara does not make any attempt to investigate the nature of *avidyā*. When speaking of it in isolation, he does not label it "indeterminable." Like Swami Satchidanandendra, Hacker draws attention to the fact that in earlier times it was the Absolute that had been regarded as standing above all human predicates such as real and unreal. "But soon after Śaṃkara the point was reached where only the world was designated as 'neither . . . nor'; the Self, on the other hand, became so to speak the presiding deity of logic."[72] Śaṃkara does not discuss the "seat" (*āśraya*) of ignorance, or the question of what it is that it conceals, the question of its "object" (*viṣaya*). For his followers, including Sureśvara, the question of the seat of *avidyā* was an intellectual problem that had to be faced and solved on the plane of logic and intellectual enquiry. Given that the Absolute was declared to be "pure Consciousness" and infallible by nature, it could not be the seat of *avidyā*, the being afflicted by ignorance. So some said that the individual soul was the seat of ignorance. But, in that case, in what did ignorance inhere when it

[72] *Kleine Schriften* p. 129.

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brought the individual soul into being? For Śaṃkara this was a pseudo-problem. He answers it *ad hominem*. If you feel *avidyā*, then *avidyā* inheres in you. Acquire enlightenment through the upanishadic discipline, and you will see that in reality there is no *avidyā* and there never was.

Name and Form: Indeterminability

For Śaṃkara, who kept to the terminology of the Upaniṣads more closely than his followers did, the material cause of the world was "name and form," themselves "projected" or "set up" by *avidyā*, less frequently, "of the nature of avidyā." Before the manifestation of the world at the beginning of a world-period, name and form lie unmanifest. As unmanifest, they are "indeterminable as identical with the Self or different." Hacker differs from the MV in his interpretation of the concept of the indeterminability of unmanifest name and form, while agreeing as to its importance for helping to establish the true nature of Śaṃkara's doctrine in contrast to those of his followers. If Śaṃkara calls unmanifest name and form "indeterminable as thatness or otherness" (*tattvānyatvābhyām anirvacanīya*), Hacker thinks that this may mean that, as unmanifest, they are not yet anything definite, not a "that," while they are not "other than a that," since they must be something, or the manifest world could not evolve out of them. If Śaṃkara once extends the appellation to manifest name and form, this is on the basis of *sat-kārya-vāda.* Thus the term "indeterminable" is used by Śaṃkara in the context of cosmogony, of describing the origins of the world, and not in that of evaluating the reality-grade of the world. He does not, in the manner of his later followers, argue from the indeterminable reality-grade of errors to the indeterminable reality-grade of the world as a whole. As for unmanifest name and form, Śaṃkara acknowledges that they are sometimes referred to as "*avidyā*" or as "*māyā*" or "*prakṛti*" or by other names in the ancient texts—meaning by that the Epics, Law Books and Purāṇas, as the classical Upaniṣads supply only one clear reference.

For Śaṃkara's followers, it was common to identify the terms *avidyā, māyā, prakṛti, śakti* and so on, and this without any dependence on a reference to unmanifest name and form. But in Śaṃkara's genuine texts the meanings of the terms *avidyā* and *māyā* are quite different from one another, except in the special case of when he is

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reciting ancient synonyms for unmanifest name and form. The term *māyā* is relatively little used by Śaṃkara, except in the *Gītā* Commentary. When he does use it, it most often means an illusion, especially the illusion conjured forth by the mass-hypnotist doing the rope-trick. And he compares the world, or this or that feature of it, to an illusion of this kind. He does also, though less typically, use the term "*māyā*" in the sense found in the traditional texts as far back as the *Rg Veda* to mean the creative and delusive power of a deity, though in Śaṃkara's case the reference is not to a subordinate deity but to Viṣṇu as the creator of the world.

Indeterminability and Vivarta

Śaṃkara and Sureśvara did not speak either of reality-grades or *vivarta*. Both use the verb "*vivartate*" as a synonym for "*pariṇamate*" to mean "undergoes transformation." But it was noticed by their followers that their references to the world were verbally inconsistent. When compared to perceptual illusions, the world was called real. When it was compared with the Absolute, however, it was called unreal. Or again, when compared to perceptual illusions, it was said to have "practical reality" (*vyāvahārika-sattva*), but compared to the Absolute it only had "phenomenal reality" (*prātibhāsika*). From the standpoint of ordinary worldly experience, a thing whose existence is exhausted in its appearance and which is subject to cancellation (*bādha*) through a correct perception of the substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) on which it appears is said to have *prātibhāsika sattva* or mere phenomenal reality. Water in the world has practical reality in that you can bathe in it and it appears to last from day to day and to exist for different observers. The water of a mirage has only phenomenal reality, since it exists only for him who sees it and when he sees it, and even he cannot bathe in it or drink it. The later authors introduced more conceptual clarity into the system by keeping the term "practical reality" for the world, while reserving the term "mere phenomenal reality" strictly for illusions within the world-appearance and dreams. Final reality (*pararmārtha-sattva*) belongs to the Absolute alone, and, compared to it, both the lower grades of reality fall within the realm of "indeterminable as real or unreal."[73] Nevertheless,

[73] *Kleine Schriften* p. 127.

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the world gains a little in reality-content. It is given a higher reality-grade than that of perceptual illusions, and cannot now so easily be called "*prātibhāsika.*" There is a hint here that the perspective attained by Gauḍapāda, Śaṃkara and Sureśvara was later lost. According to these authors, if the world appears to a person as real, it is real for him exactly as it appears; but if he awakens to the undifferentiated Self, he sees that the world never existed. They enunciate this as if from their own immediate experience. The later authors may distinguish theoretically between abstract knowledge of the truth, gained by hearing about it, and immediate concrete realization, but they tend to speak of immediate realization as if it was something that they had not attained themselves. It is curious that Hacker specifies Vimuktātman as an example of this, much in the manner of Swami Satchidanandendra, already noted above.[74]

After the Advaitins had discovered the notion of grades of reality, they found it useful to introduce a new term, that of "*vivarta,*" borrowed from Bhartṛhari and his school of metaphysical grammarians. This term, as we have seen, was not used by Śaṃkara or Sureśvara. Prakāśātman, probably following Bhartṛhari, defines *vivarta* as "an appearance of one thing, in contradiction to its previous nature, as if it had many forms—forms that it assumes without falling from its true nature."[75] This gives a formula for explaining how the non-dual Absolute of the Upaniṣads can appear as the multiplicity of the world, without the recourse of appealing to a second principle. Śaṃkara and Sureśvara, in speaking of the Absolute as cause of the world, had to speak of it appearing to be a cause through *avidyā*, which verbally suggests a duality between the Absolute and *avidyā*. But with the help of the term "*vivarta*" it became possible to speak of the Absolute as cause of the world directly and without reference to a second principle. A modification where the effect is of the same reality-grade as its material cause, and in the production of which the cause undergoes change, could be spoken of as a "*pariṇāma*": a modification where the effect was of a lower reality-grade than the material cause, and in the production of which the latter was not affected, could be spoken of as a "*vivarta*" (somewhat

[74] *Kleine Schriften* p. 136, cp. MV p. 751.

[75] *Vivarta* p. 40. *Vivaraṇa* p. 653, cp. Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya with Haryupajnavtti*, ed. Cārudeva Śāstrī (Lahore: Ram Lal Kapoor Trust Society, 1935), p. 5.

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like the emanation of the Neoplatonists)—example, the apparition of a snake in a rope due to perceptual error. It is important to note that the snake was regarded as an *object*, a *vivarta* transformation relative to the Absolute, but a *pariṇāma* transformation of the *avidyā* constituting the rope. In the case of a perceptual error, the *avidyā* latent in the perceiver was conceived as somehow eliciting a transformation in the *avidyā* constituting the rope—a transformation only open to the perception of the person in error. Perceptual illusions, interpreted in this strange way, were used by the later Advaita authors as the example to justify a world-theory which saw in the world of plurality an illusory modification of the Absolute, which existed as an object in the latter, but without introducing any real change into it, on account of having a lower reality-grade.

Conclusion

One might gather from Hacker's early work on Śaṃkara that the latter was not seriously concerned with constructing a world-theory, but rather with leading his pupils and the students of his works to a realization of their own true nature as the infinite Absolute, untrammelled by the world. The later authors, under pressure of criticism from other schools, try to construct a more or less coherent world-theory. As a perceptual illusion often implies, in their theories, an illusory external object, so the whole world of plurality was conceived as a similar illusion on a cosmic scale. One cannot attribute such a theory to Śaṃkara. For him an illusion is a mere false idea (*mithyā-pratyaya*). But until the world of plurality is known to have been an illusion it is to be treated as if it were perfectly real, and there are passages in Śaṃkara in which duality is actually emphasized, almost in the manner of the Hindu Realists, in order to safeguard the purity of the Self.

On the topic of the contrast between Śaṃkara's conception of *avidyā* and those of his successors, the degree to which Swami Satchidanandendra agrees with Hacker hardly needs emphasizing. He held that it was name and form in their unmanifest state, and not *avidyā* or *māyā*, that constituted the material cause of the world. In agreement with Hacker, he says that, according to Śaṃkara, name and form were imagined through *avidyā* and sometimes spoken of as "*a māyā*" (illusion). They were not designated as "neither real nor

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unreal." Śaṃkara did not maintain Vivarta Vāda. And he did not at all maintain the theory, so typical of Advaita Vivarta Vāda, that sense-illusions are objects.

What is the significance for the Indologist of this wide area of agreement between Hacker and Satchidanandendra Swami, trained philologist and orthodox pundit, on Śaṃkara's handling of the term *avidyā* and kindred topics? It means that a re-appraisal of Śaṃkara's doctrines is probably required. The text-books on Indian philosophy still tend to tell us that Śaṃkara was a *māyā-vādin*, an *anirvacanīya-vādin* and a *vivarta-vādin*. These three vādas are thought-constructions of Śaṃkara's followers, read back into his own texts. The need for revision is all the more pressing because there are many well known post-Śaṃkara works, such as the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* and the *Ātmabodha*, which contain the later thought-constructions but are still attributed to Śaṃkara's name.

Śaṃkara kept close to experience and theorized little. His job was to present the upanishadic texts as a unified body of teaching. His guiding principle, handed down from earlier teachers of his own school, was "That which cannot be expressed in its true form directly is expressed indirectly through false attribution followed by retraction." The Absolute has no finite attributes. But if the pupil is only told that much, he will never gain access to it. So the Upaniṣads gently lead him on towards a recognition of the true nature of the Absolute by first suggesting that it has this, that or the other form that he can comprehend, and then later denying the lower aspects of it in favour of the higher ones. Gradually the pupil is led to higher conceptions and more sublime meditations, until the ultimate silence is reached. All the intermediate positions are provisional, props for the meditator at a certain stage. They are not philosophical dogmas to be argued over and defended as the final truth. To have a definite conception of the Absolute is to limit it. Gauḍapāda, Śaṃkara and Sureśvara avoided doing this by following the ancient discipline of "false attribution followed by retraction." This discipline was forgotten by their followers in their zeal to construct systems of philosophy. But system-building did not lie close to Śaṃkara's heart. What he produced, rather, was a "negative theology," in many respects similar to the negative theology found amongst some of the mystics of Christianity.

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ŚAṄKARA'S LIFE AND WORKS AS A SOURCE FOR A HERMENEUTICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Arvind Sharma

I

If I have not misjudged the situation, as I well might have, the title of the paper is likely to catch the reader by surprise. The audaciousness of the title might leave some readers even breathless, while others might be inclined to mutter, *sotto voce*, "don't hold your breath"! If this response lacks the power to surprise me, it is because it used to be my own before I started exploring the Hindu philosophical textual tradition from the perspective of human rights. For the popular image of Śaṅkara as a revolutionary in the realm of philosophical thought and a conservative in the realm of social thought seems to be so well established that any attempt to document it might invite the charge of pedantry. One started with the assumption that to hear any positive resonances for what are called human rights in the Hindu tradition one is better advised to go around Śaṅkara rather than through him. There are also good grounds, on the face of it, for making such an assumption. To the extent that the caste-system is to be considered antithetical to any conception of human rights, Śaṅkara appears at several points to uphold the supremacy of the higher *varṇas: brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*,[1] and, at times, of the *brāhmaṇas* alone.[2] As Klaus K. Klostermaier notes:

> *Basically, the Brahmins did not develop "human rights" but "caste rights,"* which had the side effect that in the course of time about one-fifth of the total population, as "out-castes," had virtually no rights. They were treated worse than cattle, which even in legal theory ranked above them. People became casteless by violating the rules of their castes,

[1] See his gloss on *Bhagavadgīta* XIII.41; Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, tr., *The Bhagavadgita with the Commentary of Śaṅkara* (Madras: Samata Books, 1985), p. 472.

[2] Ibid., p. 3. Also see Lance E. Nelson, "Living Liberation in Śaṅkara and Classical Advaita: Sharing the Holy Waiting for God," in Andrew O. Fort and Patricia Y. Mumme, eds., *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 50, note 2.

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> either by marrying contrary to the caste regulations, by following professions not allowed by caste rules, or by committing other acts punished by expulsion from the caste. Some books give them the appellation fifth caste, but that may leave a wrong impression: they were cut off from all the rights and privileges that caste society extended to its members, ritually impure and ostensibly the product of bad karma coming to fruition.[3]

Śaṅkara sometimes gave the impression of being precisely such a Brahmin who upheld "caste rights" over human rights.[4] Gradually, however, some chinks began to appear in this conservative armour. It became clear, from Śaṅkara's gloss on *Vedāntasūtra* I.3.38, that although caste limited accessibility to the Vedas it did not limit accessibility to liberation on anyone's part.[5] That "all have the right to

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[3] Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism* (second edition) (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 343, emphasis added.

[4] See P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974), pp. 945–946.

[5] "In his bhashya on the Brahmasutras which exclude shudras from access to the supreme liberating knowledge in the Veda, Shankara cites the cases of Vidura and the righteous butcher of the *Mahabharata* and explains: 'As in them there was generation of sublime knowledge due to the impressions of their past actions (*pūrvakritasaṃskāra*), their attaining the fruit of it cannot be prohibited or prevented. Knowledge must culminate in its fruit.' Further, according to the smritis, the four castes have a right of access to Itihasa-Puranas; so through them they can attain the highest knowledge, but not through the Veda. Such was Shankara's conclusion, which, in fact, makes the prohibition of Vedic study for shudras ridiculous, for they may get the very same knowledge from other sources!

"Tradition has preserved an instance of Shankara actually reducing this prohibition to absurdity. Once during his extensive travels through the country, in a village he came across an outcaste leper in a pitiable state, but with the sadhana-sampatti mentioned above. To free him from transmigration, tradition avers, Shankara composed for him a sloka in the form of question and answer which was nothing but a faithful echo of Yajnavalkya-Janaka dialogue of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (IV.3.1.ff.):

"What is your Light? The sun during the day and lamps etc., during the night. Let it be so, but tell me what is the Light that beholds (cognises) the sun, moon. etc., as shining? That is my eye. And, when it is closed, what beholds (cognises) your mind? 'I'. So, you are the supreme Light. That I Am, my Master." Hearing this the outcaste leper, according to tradition, forthwith became a Brahmajnani (Knower of the Absolute) and had a vision of Truth!

This was an ingenious way of circumventing superstitious orthodoxy. If one wishes to enlighten those whom orthodoxy does not permit to hear the holy texts, let one express their meaning in other words. A quiet peaceful revolution, indeed! No other great Vedantic teacher of medieval India who commented on the Brahmasutra showed such liberalism and humanism. Shankara was, indeed, a most compassionate Brahmajnani (Karunalaya)." (K. Satchidananda Murty, *Inauguration Address: Rashtriya Sri Shankaracharya Jayanti Mahotsava* [New Delhi: Vigyan Bhayan, 2045 Vaisakha Shukla Panchami] pp. 8–9). Also see P. V. Kane, op. cit. Vol. V part II, p. 921, note 1468 (a).

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the highest knowledge" is also the acknowledged conclusion of Śaṅkara's commentary on *Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Śikṣāvalli, Anuvāka* 11.[6]

One also began encountering evidence of a more direct nature, of actions attributed to him whose impulses might lie close to those which inform current human rights discourse. He was said to have endeavoured to prohibit the sale of girls in marriage, to even abolish Satī.[7] The point here is not one of causation but of association; not whether he actually brought this about but that such action should be attributed to him.

The case of Śaṅkara as congenitally anti-human rights no longer seemed to be such an open-and-shut case when I was approached by Professor Bradley Malkovsky to contribute an article for a *Festschrift* under preparation for Father De Smet. His request made me nostalgically recall the marvelous evenings I had spent in Father De Smet's company when I was once stranded in Pune (thanks to a bureaucratic mishap) several years ago and am happy for the opportunity his request provides me to explore the theme further, and perhaps even more systematically.

II

In what I attempt next I shall try to examine the ways in which at least part of Śaṅkara's life and works can be brought in line with our current thinking on human rights. In that sense my research is theory-laden and an example of engaged (if not necessarily engaging) scholarship. I will let the reader judge whether, in the end, the exercise proves worthwhile.

I shall undertake my exercise in the form of four movements. In the first movement I will lift a specific passage from Śaṅkara's gloss on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* I.4.14 for special examination, as a possible illustration of human rights thinking which can be identified in Śaṅkara. In the second movement, I shall lift a special incident from the life of Śaṅkara for special treatment in the light of human rights discourse. In the third movement, I shall identify an understanding of the caste-system to be found in Śaṅkara and demonstrate how an exegesis based on it can radically alter our understanding of caste

[6] K. Satchidananda Murty, op. cit., p. 6.
[7] P. V. Kane, op. cit., Vol. II, Part I, p. 506.

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in its relationship to human rights. In a final movement I shall try to replicate what Śaṅkara attempted at the level of Hindu metaphysical thought, in terms of Hindu social thought, utilizing his own exegetical techniques, and see what one is led to.

III

I begin by citing the concerned passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (I.4.14). The preceding passages describe how the *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra varṇas* were created *successively* but yet the world did not flourish. In other words, despite the presence of the four *varṇas* the social order did not begin to function, as if it suffered from some shortcoming which had to be rectified before it could, as when a car all ready to move will not start if the key has not yet been turned. I now cite the concerned passage, along with its translation by S. Radhakrishnan;

> 14. *sa naiva vyabhavat. tac chreyo-rūpam atyasṛjata dharmam: tad etat kṣatrasya kṣatraṃ yad dharmaḥ, tasmād dharmād paraṃ nāsti: atho abalīyān balīyāṃsam āśaṃsate dharmeṇa, yathā rājñā evam. yo vai sa dharmaḥ satyaṃ vai tat: tasmāt satyaṃ vadantam āhuḥ, dharmaṃ vadatīti, dharmaṃ vā vadantam, satyaṃ vadatiti: etad hy evaitad ubhayaṃ bhavati.*

> 14. Yet he did not flourish. He created further an excellent form, justice. This is the power of the Kṣatriya class, viz. justice. Therefore there is nothing higher than justice. So a weak man hopes (to defeat) a strong man by means of justice as one does through a king. Verily, that which is justice is truth. Therefore they say of a man who speaks the truth, he speaks justice or of a man who speaks justice that he speaks the truth. Verily, both these are the same.[8]

Śaṅkara raises the crucial question: why did it not flourish?[9] His answer is extremely significant from the point of view of human

[8] S. Radhakrishnan, ed., *The Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 170; for another translation see Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 84, who translates *dharma* as Law.

[9] *Ten Principal Upaniṣads with Śāṅkarabhāṣya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), p. 683.

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rights discourse, for he seems to be saying that it is in the very nature of the state to oppress and unless society is provided with a legal bulwark against such oppression, it will not flourish. To this bulwark the name *Dharma* is given in the text. The doctrine of human rights, according to one view, is to be traced to the idea that the individual had to be protected from the arbitrary actions of the state (*kṣatrasyāniyatāśaṅkayā*).[10]

Two points seem to me to be remarkable here. The first is that this explanation is not quite there in the Upaniṣadic text, it is in Śaṅkara's explanation of it. And the idea therefore must be seen as coming from him. He would, of course, deny this, although the history of Hindu thought may be summed up in the aphorism: originality disguised as commentary. The second point is its striking similarity to human rights thinking, perhaps as striking an anticipation of it as the exegetical demythologization of Bultmann by Hindu thinkers of the fourth century B.C.E.[11]

IV

The incident I would now like to allude to is the famous one of Śaṅkara's encounter with the untouchable in Kāśī,[12] also cited by S. Radhakrishnan[13] and K. Satchidananda Murty.[14]

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[10] Ibid. *Dharma* is even said to possess a resplendent form like the other *varṇas*, reminiscent of the moral charge we associate with doctrine of human rights.

[11] K. Satchidananda Murty, *Revelation and Reason in Advaita Vedānta* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), p. 312.

[12] According to tradition Śaṅkara wrote the five verses known as *Maneesha Panchakam* in response to this encounter (Swami Chinmayananda, *Maneesha Panchakam* (by Adi Shankaracharya) [Powai, Bombay: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, 1983] pp. 1–24). Swami Chinmayananda says (ibid., pp. 2–3): "Lord Jagadeeswara does not spare his chosen workers. Adi Sankara too was not to be spared from this Cosmic-law! He too has to be re-strung and re-tuned from time to time. The traditional story behind this Panchakam is rather skeletonal. One day Adi Sankara along with his disciples, Padmapada and others, after a cool and refreshing bath in the Ganges at Kasi, was on his way to the sacred temple of Sri Viswanath. Everyone is a creature of the powerful social values of his age. Sankara saw a dirty sweeper, with his professional instrument under his arms, coming along. The Brahmin in the Acharya, coloured by the traditional custom, prevalent at that time cried, 'Go Go'—'Move Move'".

"Even in a Man-of-perfection there are careless moments when he gets thrown out, and comes to function identifying with his body and mind. With his individualistic ego he experiences and asserts the plurality, and at such moments he may unwittingly come to live mechanically the existing customs and general values of his times—be they good or bad, be they right or wrong.

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When he was at Kāśī a startling incident is said to have occurred. . . . One day while he was proceeding towards the river with his disciples he met a caṇḍāla on the way and asked him to move away. The caṇḍāla, however, promptly pointed out the contradiction between the Vedantic idea of spiritual unity and the caste notion of untouchability. Śaṅkara was quick to realize his error. Whether the caṇḍāla was Śiva

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"The refreshing waters of the Ganges intensifies the body-consciousness in the bather, and perhaps, in that mood when the master was marching out towards the temple—'The mere external symbol of the inexhaustive springs of Consciousness within'—for no fault of his, unwittingly he happened to step, for the moment, into a lower state of consciousness. In the eyes of the Lord even this slip is inexcusable in His chosen messenger!"

[13] "There is a story that when Śaṅkara, in spite of his non-dualism, asked an outcaste to clear the way for him, the outcaste who was God himself asked: 'Do you wish my body to leave your body, or my spirit to leave your spirit?' If democracy is to be seriously implemented, then caste and untouchability must go." (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra* [London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960] pp. 162–163).

[14] "This may also be the place for giving some details about the traumatic but creatively transforming incident in his life mentioned in his biographies. In Kashi on an occasion while Shankara, accompanied by his disciples, was going towards the Ganga for a holy bath and prayers, he saw a paraiah with ferocious dogs coming across his path and shouted to him: 'Move away! Move away!' But the paraiah replied:

'When hundreds of Upanishadic texts speak about the unique, pure, relationless, indivisible One Reality of the nature of truth, awareness and happiness (*satyabodhasukharūpamakhandam*), your imagining difference is surprising. Some wear dress of recluses and act like them; without any real knowledge they deceive householders. When you shouted "Move away", were you addressing the body or the self? All bodies are made of food, they are all material, and do not differ from one another. As for the inner witness Self, how is the consideration of its difference in a pariah and a brahmana appropriate? As there is no difference in the sun's reflections in the divine Ganga and toddy, so there is none among the One Self's reflections in various bodies. Neglecting the one perfect, eternal and bodyless Person in all the bodies, why this false apprehension, "I am a pure brahman, O Dog-eater, get away"?'

"Surprised and deeply shaken, Shankara immediately recognised the truth of this and replied: 'O You best among the embodied, you have asserted what is Truth. So because of the words of you who are the knower of the Self, I am at once abandoning the notion "this is an outcaste".'

"Shankara at once broke forth into fiver verses, each ending with: 'he who has such steadfast insight is my guru, whether he be an outcaste or a brahmana. This is my firm understanding'.

"The first verse, for example, says: 'I am the Awareness (Samvit) which clearly shines forth in waking, dream and witnesses the world—and not the thing seen. He who has such steadfast insight is my guru. . . .' The other verses reiterate the truth of Unity in different ways. According to the story, while Shankara was thus rhapsodising about Oneness, he was blessed with a vision of Siva in the untouchable and his four dogs appeared to him as the four Vedas. Shankara's encounter with the chandala must have been as "creative" as the Maritzburg experience was for Mahatma Gandhi." (K. Satchidananda Murty, op. cit. pp. 6–8, Sanskrit text omitted).

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> himself in human form or whether Śaṅkara realized that the caṇḍālas like all beings, could not be anything thing other than Śiva, are merely the same fact presented mythically or philosophically. The incident could hardly be a fabrication of later times when such a repudiation of untouchability or caste-inequality was unthinkable within orthodoxy.[15]

This, I submit, is an extremely significant incident from the point of view of this presentation. However, although its significance has been realized by scholars like S. Radhakrishnan and K. Satchidananda Murty, it has not been fully explored. It needs to be explored further. Let's go down the road less traveled.

In order to undertake such an exploration, a fresh understanding of the *varṇa* system in spatial terms seems to be called for. One may commence with the realization that as one moves down the *varṇa* hierarchy, the conceptual area of concern narrows like a cone. For example, the *brāhmaṇa* is concerned with the whole world, indeed, universe, as his area of concern. The area of concern of the *kṣatriya*, though, is still quite large, covering as it does the entire kingdom, yet it is still smaller than that of the *brāhmaṇa.* The area of concern of the *vaiśya*, consisting not of spiritual but temporal or business concerns is still narrower, while that of the *śūdra*, concerned as he is with serving those in his immediate environment, is still more narrow. Thus the conceptual area of concern gradually declines as one moves down the hierarchy. By contrast with the conceptual area of concern, the geographical area of activity of the various *varṇas* provides a mirror image of gradual contraction. Thus the *śūdra* can move around freely all over the world (Manu VIII.157). The *vaiśya* travels across kingdoms, the king is confined to his kingdom, and the preferred area of residence of the *brāhmaṇa* is indeed limited (Manu II.17–23).

The encounter between Śaṅkara and the Caṇḍāla is just a remarkable challenge to the limitations of both—the geographical limitation of the *brāhmaṇa*, and the conceptual limitation of the Caṇḍāla. Be it noted, in the context of social encounter as a catalyst of social justice, that each has overcome his respective limitation. Śaṅkara is a globe-trotter so far as India is concerned[16] and the Caṇḍāla is an Advaitin.

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[15] G. C. Pande, *Life and Thought of Śaṅkarācārya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), p. 87.

[16] Ibid., *passim.*

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The significance of the encounter, however, is not yet exhausted, for as *sannyāsin* Śaṅkara is beyond all ritual pollution, just like the *śūdra* (*śūdre pātakaṃ nāsti*). There is a social injustice involved, not merely in modern but even in traditional terms, on the part of Śaṅkara in asking the untouchable to move away *qua* untouchable. But the plot thickens further. Although as a *śūdra*, one can move about as one pleases, an untouchable's movements are restricted. Fa-hsien informs us that they had to announce their arrival in a village, so that the people could avoid pollution.

However, technically, the untouchable falls in the category of the *śūdra*, as, according to Manu (X.5), there is no fifth *varṇa*. In other words, both Śaṅkara and the Caṇḍāla find themselves trapped in a liminal sphere of circumscribed universality. Śaṅkara is a *brāhmaṇa* who is now a *sannyāsin* and the untouchable is an untouchable who is also *śūdra*—yet both have compromised their universality and have drawn invisible lines which do not really exist. Thus the text called *Śaṅkaradigvijaja* states that Śaṅkara lost sight of the untouchable as it were, and beheld lord Śiva instead. The last line describing the encounter may be translated as follows:

> Filled with fear, devotion, humility,
> faith, joy and wonder the devout Śaṅkara
> began to praise Śiva on beholding
> His eight forms (6.40).

The Sanskrit text of the first line might intrigue the readers and is cited: *bhayena bhaktyā vinayena dhṛtyā yuktaḥ harṣeṇa ca vismayena*. Be it noted that among the forms of Śiva being mentioned space, sun, moon, etc. figure prominently. In other words, all distinctions are dissolved and Śiva is seen in the cosmos, hence also in the untouchable.

Thus several pairs of identities are involved: (1) *sannyāsin* and Caṇḍāla: (2) Śaṅkara (supposedly an incarnation of Śiva) and Śiva himself and (3) one *jīva* and another (devoid of *upādhis*). The encounter amounts to meeting oneself—ritualistically, theologically and spiritually. This is how the category of *abheda* or absence of distinctions sheds light on the issue of social justice. So long as there are distinctions, discriminations will persist, or at least the potential for them to arise. It is when all distinctions have been erased that all discrimination can be ultimately removed and the possibility of true social justice emerges.

Could it not be the case that we are making too much of a stray incident here, a flash in the Advaitic pan? I was inclined to think

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so until I got an opportunity to compare Medhātithi's and Kullūka Bhaṭṭa's commentary on Manu II.238, which contains the exhortation that one may obtain knowledge of the supreme *dharma* (*paraṃ dharmaṃ*) even from an untouchable (*antyādapi*). Medhātithi, writing ca. 900, that is, around the same time as Śaṅkara, takes *dharma* in the sense of ordinary conduct and takes Manu to mean that even if an untouchable tells you, "Don't bathe in these waters", etc., one should heed his words. He takes *dharma* to mean *vyavasthā*. By contrast, Kullūka Bhaṭṭa, writing ca. 1100, unhesitatingly states that one may obtain knowledge of the means of *mokṣa* (*mokṣopāya*) even from a *caṇḍāla*! One has to wonder what made the difference, and it is tempting to imagine that Śaṅkara's life and works may have had some role to play in this hermeneutical revolution. The temptation becomes even more alluring if Kullūka Bhaṭṭa's gloss on Manu. II.238 is compared with Śaṅkara's gloss on *Brahmasūtra* I.3.38.

V

Despite this incident in practice, Śaṅkara in theory comes across as a staunch upholder of the traditional caste-system. On a close look, however, what seemed to be a closed or even sealed door seems somewhat ajar. The rules of the caste system constitute a vast web, some could say cobweb, of rules and regulations. But the question arises: was the theory of *varṇas* only a theory even in ancient times? This thought, which crosses our mind now, must also have crossed that of Śaṅkara, given the visible gap between theory and practice. We know this to be so, for as P. V. Kane notes:

> Śaṃkarācārya in his bhāṣya on Vedāntasūtra I.3.33 remarks that, though in his day *varṇas* and *āśramas* had become disorganized and unstable as to their *dharmas*, that was not the case in other ages, since otherwise the śāstras laying down regulations for them would have to be deemed purposeless or futile.[17]

The remark is innocuous enough, but seems to me to carry a very subversive implication. For if the *āśramas* and *varṇas* are now out of joint, then how is one to determine, say, someone's *varṇa*? The determination of one's *āśrama* may not pose as grave a problem, for one's age could be used as an index,[18] but if descent and society have

[17] P. V. Kane, op. cit., Vol. II, part I, p. 61.
[18] P. V. Kane, op. cit., Vol. II part I, p. 417.

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become corrupt then we are in real trouble, so far as the determination of one's *varṇa* is concerned. Apparently this is not an unprecedented problem, as the *Manusmṛti* seems to anticipate this state of affairs. The question is posed as follows: if one's *varṇa* is not obvious, how is it to be determined? Manu's answer, in a nutshell, is this: the *varṇa* is to be determined by a person's actions—(*karmabhir svarai vibhāvayet*), one may discover it by one's acts (X.57d).[19]

The point, in my view, has not received the attention it deserves. Allow me, therefore, first of all to cite the cluster of verses in the *Manusmṛti* where it appears, in Bühler's translation: (X.57–63):

> 57. A man of impure origin, who belongs to any caste, (*varṇa*, but whose character is) not known, who, (though) not an Āryan, has the appearance of an Āryan, one may discover by his acts.
> 58. Behaviour unworthy of an Āryan, harshness, cruelty, and habitual neglect of the prescribed duties betray in this world a man of impure origin.
> 59. A base-born man either resembles in character his father, or his mother, or both; he can never conceal his real nature.
> 60. Even if a man, born in a great family, sprang from criminal intercourse, he will certainly possess the faults of his (father), be they small or great.
> 61. But that kingdom in which such bastards, sullying (the purity of) the castes, are born, perishes quickly together with its inhabitants.
> 62. Dying, without the expectation of a reward, for the sake of Brāhmaṇas and of cows, or in the defense of women and children, secures beatitude for those excluded (from the Āryan community, bāhya).
> 63. Abstention from injuring (creatures), veracity, abstention from unlawfully appropriating (the goods of others), purity, and control of organs, Manu has declared to be the summary of the law for the four castes.[20]

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[19] See G. Bühler, tr., *The Laws of Manu* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967: Indian edition), p. 415.

[20] Ibid., pp. 415–416. A more recent translation is also provided by Wendy Doniger with Brian K. Smith, *The Laws of Manu* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991) pp. 242–243): "[57] An unknown man, of no (visible) class but born of a defiled womb and no Aryan, may seem to have the form of an Aryan, but he can be discovered by his own innate activities. [58] Un-Aryan behaviour, harshness, cruelty, and habitual failure to perform the rituals are the manifestations in this world indicating that a man is born of a defiled womb. [59] A man born of a bad womb shares his father's character, or his mother's or both; but he can never suppress his own nature. [60] A man born of the confusion of wombs, even if he comes from a leading family, will inherit that very character, to a greater or lesser degree. [61] But the kingdom in which these degraded bastards are born, defiling the classes, quickly perishes, together with the people who live there. [62] Giving up the body

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There is, it seems, a distinction to be drawn here between those who fall within the fourfold *varṇa* scheme and those who fall outside it (*bāhya*). Verse X.62 explains how even those who are formally excluded are nevertheless soteriologically included. The point of interest for us at the moment is the basis for *formal* inclusion and exclusion. The verses appear in a context in which birth turns out to be an unsatisfactory criterion to make this distinction. Manu then advises that the *varṇa*, *normally* determined by birth, may be inferred by action. Verse X.62 applies to those whose exclusion is explicit and unambiguous. The ambiguous cases, however, remain to be resolved.

The first step in this resolution, from this point of view, seems to be provided by X.63, which indicates the general universal characteristics through which the *general* inference may be drawn whether somebody (whose birth-ascription is uncertain as the previous verses indicate) is to be determined. The *cāturvarṇya dharmas*—that is, the code of conduct common to all *varṇas*—helps decide whether the person is to be included in the fourfold scheme or excluded from it.

Once the general inference has been successfully made that the person is included—a more *specific* inference is now called for: to which particular *varṇa* does the person belong. And the answer once again is that this is to be decided by the person's actions.

It needs to be clearly grasped that both Śaṅkara's statement and Manu's statement are dealing with a context of *varṇa-saṅkara*, a context in which the "confusion of classes or castes" has *already* occurred. The key point to note here is the reversal of criterion: whereas normally birth indicates *varṇa*, which indicates the kind of actions appropriate to one's station; in a state of *varṇa-saṅkara* the rule is reversed. One looks not to birth but to actions and from actions infers birth; the arrow of determination is reversed from ascription of birth → *varṇa* → action to action → *varṇa* → presumption of birth.

If Śaṅkara concedes that *varṇa-saṅkara* has occurred, then, following Manu, he will presumably have to accept the procedural reversal in determining *varṇa.* In effect, then, *varṇa* comes to be defined by action. Needless to say, this position is essentially consistent with human rights, for vocational differentiation based on one's action is a universal phenomenon.

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instinctively for the sake of a priest or a cow or in the defence of women and children is the way for even the excluded (castes) to achieve success. [63] Manu has said that non-violence, truth, not stealing, purification, and the suppression of the sensory powers is the duty of the four classes, in a nutshell."

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The question of caste-distinctions still remains, with their different privileges and responsibilities, but the birth-ascription of caste fades away in the light of facts given above.

VI

This leads one to the last hermeneutical maneuver. A great metaphysical achievement of Śaṅkara was to dissolve the world of differences into *māyā* and to impart to this *māyā* a status which enabled him to assert the sole reality of Brahman. According to the classical Hindu tradition, the Vedas are the unimpeachable guide in matters of *mokṣa* and *dharma.* Śaṅkara interpreted the Vedas in such a way as to establish the sole reality of Brahman whose realization led to *mokṣa.* This was a daring exegetical maneuver.

Suppose now that Śaṅkara, in keeping with the intellectual economy with which he shaped a metaphysical system, were also to shape a social system—what would the result look like? In order to appreciate what the outcome might be we could accept as his *mahāvākya* now from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* the utterance: *ekam eva* (I.4.11). That is to say: in the beginning there was one *varṇa*, which would then mean automatically that there was no *varṇa.* The full Upaniṣadic text runs; *brahma vā idam agra āsīt, ekam eva; tad ekam na vyabhavat.*[21] Radhakrishnan translates: "Verily, in the beginning this (world) was *Brahman*, one only. That, being one, did not flourish."

It needs to be carefully noted that Śaṅkara fully accepts this statement. He says clearly: *nāsīt kṣatrādibhedaḥ.*[22] That is to say, the distinctions of *kṣatriya* etc. did not exist.[23] S. Radhakrishnan sums up the matter thus: "At the beginning there was only one caste or class,"[24] which, as we noted, really means that in the beginning there existed a casteless and classless society. Here we have the societal counterpart to the metaphysical emphasis on the sole reality of the one. If we interpret the social teachings of the Upaniṣads with the help of this *mahāvākya* we will be led inevitably to a society devoid of distinctions, just as *sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma* led us inevitably to a reality devoid of all differences.

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[21] S. Radhakrishnan, ed., op. cit., 69.
[22] Ibid.
[23] *Ten Principal Upaniṣads with Śāṅkarabhāṣya*, p. 681. Also see S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 169.
[24] Ibid.

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At this point we could justly be accused of over-enthusiasm; while the metaphysical *one* shines in its own splendor, the societal *one* did not flourish—*na vyabhavat*. So other *varṇas* had to be created.

We are at a crucial fork-point in our deliberation, and the second end of the fork is that the differentiation of society into further groups has been provided with an axiological criterion: it must lead to human flourishing! Here *śruti* is clearly supported by *smṛti* in the two places in the *Manusmṛti* where Manu refers to the establishment of the caste system as a whole—in I.31 and I.89—where he refers to human and cosmic flourishing. The two verses are cited below in translation:

> Then, *so that the worlds and people would prosper and increase*, from his mouth he created the priest, from his arms the ruler, from his thighs the commoner, and from his feet the servant (I.31). But *to protect this whole creation*, the lustrous one made separate innate activities for those born of his mouth, arms, thighs and feet (I.87).[25]

So the question which we have to ask in the spirit of Śaṅkara is: has the social differentiation resulted in human flourishing? For if it hasn't then its purpose has been defeated and society must return to its state of pristine purity and try to discover this time if it might not flourish—not through the four *varṇas*—but the fifth excellent form (*śreyorūpa*) which was created to make them flourish. Let us not forget that even after the creation of four *varṇas* it did not flourish;[26] only after *dharma* was created did it flourish.

The social counterpart to Śaṅkara's metaphysical hermeneutics is therefore *justice*, and justice alone. For if the caste system must stand canceled by its own criterion of creation then "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right,"[27]—*puruṣamātrasambandhibhiḥ*,[28] not only soteriologically but also sociologically.

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[25] Wendy Doniger with Brian K. Smith, op. cit., pp. 6–7; 12. Emphasis added. For another translation see G. Bühler (op. cit., pp. 13–14; 24): "But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, he caused the Brāhmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaiśya, and the Śūdra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs, and his feet (I.31)." "But in order to protect this universe he, the most resplendent one, assigned to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet (I.87)."

[26] Robert Ernest Hume, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

[27] *Twenty-Five Human Rights Documents* (Center for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University, 1994), p. 6.

[28] Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahmasūtra* III.4.38.

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ŚAṄKARA IN CONTEMPORARY INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: A BRĀHMIN'S PERSPECTIVE

S. N. Rao

The aim of this paper is to show the relevance of Śaṅkara for resolving some of the theological problems that arise in inter-religious dialogue. As the title suggests, the perspective is that of "a" Brāhmin, with the emphasis on the indefinite article. For it is well-known that there is no entity called a typical Brāhmin let alone a typical Hindu. Each Hindu is shaped by the sect or sub-sect to which he belongs and by the historical events to which he has been subject from his birth. Therefore it becomes incumbent on me to indicate my own bias and my own understanding of Śaṅkara by indulging here in a little bit of autobiographical reflections.[1]

I was born in Trivandrum, the capital city of Kerala in India, in December 1928 in an orthodox Madhva family. I belong to the Rig-Vedic tradition. My family deity (Kula-devata) is Narasimha, the fourth avatara of Vishnu, and I am named after Him. We Brāhmins do not normally follow the western system of family name, surname etc. I have always had difficulty in completing immigration forms whenever I travelled abroad. My full name is Srinivāsa Rao Narasimhamoorthy Rao, the first part being the name of my father, which again refers to Vishnu only. You will admit that my name, like an Indian snake, is too long. Hence, I usually write my name as S. N. Rao, which looks more Chinese than Indian. I mention the above facts to show that the Brāhmin, from the time of his birth, is aligned to God. And when I say folding my hands "Namasthe" and bow to my friend I recognise the divinity in him.

There was a pūja room in our house and a Madhva priest used to come daily to do the *pūja* (ritual-worship). He used to talk about *jīvātma* and *paramātma* (individual and transcendental selves), but as a young boy I could not understand what these terms meant. I also remember reading out regularly the Bhagavatgīta in Malayalam, the

[1] See my paper, "My Dialogue Pilgrimage," in *Pilgrims of Dialogue: A Collection of Essays in Honour of Fr. Albert Nambiaparambil*, ed. A. Pushparajan (Kerala, India: Sangam Dialogue Centre, 1993), pp. 111–115.

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local language, to an old lady of the house who was paralytic and confined to bed. Though I was a student of Sanskrit at school and college levels, I was not formally exposed to any religious training.

Upanayana (literally, leading up to, initiation) is the sacrament of regeneration whereby the Brāhmin youth is spiritually reborn and becomes entitled to be called a "*dvija*" (twice-born). The Brāhmin boy gets his sacred-thread (*yajña-upa-vīta*) which confers on him the right to read the Vedas and after marriage to offer domestic sacrifices. At the time of this ceremony I was imparted the Gāyatri mantra.[2] Mantra, in this context does not mean a magic spell but only a sacred formula, a tool-word by reflecting on which one is saved (*manan-ānāt trāyate iti mantra*). The word *gāyatri* means that which saves one when sung properly. It also connotes the metre of the song. I underwent this *samskāra* (sacred rite) at the age of twelve but it took me another twenty years to understand the full significance of this mantra. And Śankara helped me to transcend such mantras by his direct approach to reality as I shall explain later in this paper.

My education was out and out secular. I started my career in the University of Travancore (now Kerala) as a senior lecturer in Food Technology and ended up as Director of Fisheries, Kerala state. Then I went over to the Government of India and became Chairman and Director of Marine Products Export Development Authority. I retired from Government service in 1985. My official work took me to various countries in the world for attending conferences etc., from Washington D.C. to Christ-Church in New Zealand. For advanced training in Food Technology, I had to stay for an extended period in West Germany and U.S.S.R. I have managed to keep up my Brāhmanical tradition in all my tours by being a vegetarian, abstaining from drinking and smoking, and by leading a simple life. These stays abroad have convinced me that human beings all over the world are the same and that they all suffer and enjoy like me. My thinking became very liberal yet my living habits have so far been Brāhminical.

There were so many ups and downs in my life and so much suffering that I had to seek a personal philosophy of life to survive.

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[2] For this mantra and its significance read: Raimundo Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience* (Pondicherry, India: All India Books, 1983), pp. 38–43; 781–794; *Dialogues with the Guru: Talks with Sri Chandrasekhara Bhārati*, ed. K. A. Krishnaswamy Iyer (Bombay: Chethana Books, 1956). See chapter 10 on Sandhya-worship, pp. 133–144.

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It is one thing to succeed in one's secular career. It is quite another to be reconciled to one's life in a religious sense. It is this ultimate religious concern that led me to a deep study of the scriptures belonging to my tradition and finally arrive at a reasonable conviction sufficient to face the absurdities of life. Vedāntic texts opened their secrets to me in my endeavour to solve my problems. I have lived till now in the light of these teachings.

As has been said, the best way to master a subject is to teach it and I have been teaching Vedānta from 1960 till now to various groups. Vedānta owes its consolidation chiefly to the three gurus or *āchāryas* of South India namely Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. I had a personal stake to understand these teachers. I married a lady-doctor belonging to the Rāmānuja sect. This was against the local customs prevalent at that time and even now among South Indian Brāhmins. In fact, my marriage took place in the famous Krishna temple at Guruvayur, Kerala. The priest who officiated at the marriage ceremony belonged to the Śaṅkara tradition, as priests belonging to the Madhva and Ramānuja traditions could not be had. In review I could say that this was an intra-religious ecumenical event! I have even now in my house the pictures of these three gurus in a single frame. Whatever these gurus might have achieved in the field of theological speculations, their contribution to the society was to divide the Brāhmin sect into three sub-sects with no prospect of inter-marriage etc. If you come to South India, you will find the "Iyers" following Śaṅkara, the "Iyengars" following Rāmānuja and the "Raos" following Madhva. Members of each sub-sect, if they are still orthodox, will show off their affiliation with the sectarian marks on their foreheads.

I started my work as a teacher of Brahma-Vidya in 1960 in Calicut, Kerala, under the patronage of the local branch of the Theosophical Society. My audience consisted of lay Hindus to whom I taught spiritual classics like the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Aṣṭā-Vakra-Gītā and Śaṅkara's works. I was transferred to Kochi, and I continued these classes in the local branch of the Theosophical Society from 1960 to 1970. I also gave a number of public talks to large audiences on Vedāntic topics.

During this period I providentially gained access to the excellent library of St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye, Kerala, where I used to live. I struck a lasting friendship with the Rector of this Seminary, Fr. Dominic OCD, originally from Spain. I remember his

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giving me as a gift a paper-back edition of St. Teresa of Avila's complete works. I made use of my free time to read in depth the classics of Catholic and Hindu religions. The Rector Father found me such a congenial dialogue partner that he used me to conduct retreats for his seminarians. I was also asked to present a paper on St. Teresa of Avila and the Bhagavad Gītā when the saint was made a Doctor of the Church in 1970. I also taught the seminarians the fine work of Śrī Nārayana Guru in the Malayalam language, "Ātma-Upadeśa-Satakam," (*One Hundred Verses on Self-instruction*) a classic work on Advaita.[3] I also came into contact with the Nārayana Gurukula group, headed by Dr. Natarāja Guru, a direct disciple of Sri Nārayana Guru (1854–1928),[4] the reputed social reformer and spiritual guru of Kerala. This opened for me a further challenge to study Vedānta in depth and sharpen my own hermeneutical tools for dialogue-work. Śrī Nārayana Guru's motto, "One caste, one religion, one God for man" struck a sympathetic chord in me. This Guru had organised a conference of all religions in his Advaita Ashram in Alwaye, Kerala as early as 1924. The proclaimed aim of this programme was "Not to argue and win but to learn and to inform." This axiom has served as the first principle in my work connected with inter-religious dialogue. Secondly, this Guru's other working principle was "Whatever be one's religion, if it makes him a better man, it should be accepted." I adopted this maxim also which made me subordinate theology to human concerns and saved me from wasting my time on vain abstract speculations. Above all, Śrī Nārayana Guru was a follower of Śaṅkara and he had revalued and restated Śaṅkara's Advaita to suit the needs of contemporary man. The simplicity and straight-forwardness of his approach helped me to consolidate my understanding of Śaṅkara and present the master to the public in an unsophisticated way. Śrī Nārayana Guru had carefully eschewed all the polemial portions from the commentaries of Śaṅkara and presented Advaita in its bare essentials, without compromising the core teachings.

Another great teacher of Kerala, Śrī Chattampi Swāmigal (1845–1924), who was a senior contemplative, fellow-pilgrim, and friend of Śrī Nārayana Guru, also influenced me much. He was also a follower

[3] *One-hundred Verses of Self-Instruction.* Text, translation and commentary by Nataraja Guru (Kerala: Gurukula Publishing House, 1969).

[4] See my paper on Nārayana Guru in Indian Church History Review Dec. 1994. Vol. XXVIII, No. 2. Many biographies of the sage in English are now available.

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of Śaṅkara. His fine work in Malayalam, "Advaita – Chintā – Paddhati" (*Reflective Methodology of Advaita*) helped me to understand the subtleties of scholastic Advaita Vedānta. However, I was not interested in his polemial works against Christianity and against the caste-restrictions, endorsed at times even by Śaṅkara, for Vedic studies. For one thing I belonged to the Brāhmin caste to which such restrictions did not apply. Secondly I was on such friendly terms with Catholic priests that I could not bear any criticism of their good work, based on certain points of dogma. Moreover Chatampi Swāmigal was reacting against the aggressive conversion of Hindus by Christians during his time and I had no need to indulge in such activities, as times had changed. Nor was I concerned like Dr. Radhakrishnan, to show off or defend Hinduism against Christianity. Whatever mistakes some Christians had committed in the past—and are still committing—I ascribed these to their immaturity, prejudice or missionary zeal.

Another Guru who influenced me greatly was Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950). He also taught Advaita and lived the life of an Advaitin. He has showed how this is compatible with the contemporary Indian situation. In spite of his habitual state of self-realisation, he used to perform his duties and other works, which belonged to the empirical life. But all these modes of action were performed without the least attachment to them. I have always made use of his teachings in inter-religious dialogue.

The decade 1970–1980 opened with a significant event in 1971 in the form of a "World Conference of Religions" at Sasthankotta, Kerala. This was the most important milestone in my work concerned with inter-religious dialogue. The technical advisor for this conference was Dr. Natarāja Guru. Dr. Guru had by then completed his magnum opus, *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*. This was a commentary on Śrī Nārayana Guru's Sanskrit work "Darśana Māla"—a garland of ten visions based on Advaita, consisting of only one hundred stanzas in all. Natarāja Guru simply took the section-headings from his unpublished book[5] as conference themes which lasted for ten days! When I asked Dr. Nataraja Guru about this in private, he could only remark that Yoga was skill in action, quoting the Bhagavad Gītā!

[5] Now available in print: Natarāja Guru, *An Integrated Science of the Absolute* (3 vols.) (Kerala: Gurukula Publishing House, 1977).

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At any rate, this event brought me into contact with a large number of Catholic theologians which helped to further my participation in inter-religious dialogue. I would like to mention here one incident which is still fresh in my memory. I was chairman of the opening day session on "God and Creation." The late Swami Ātmānanda, the author of the popular book on Śaṅkara,[6] spoke at this session, criticizing the "creation out of nothing" doctrine so dear to Catholics, as absurd, taking the official stand of Advaita. As the Chairman of the session, I had to correct him and explain the genesis and significance of the doctrine from within the Christian tradition itself. Many learned Christians in the gathering congratulated me on my precise interpretation. They even enquired whether I had a doctorate in Theology or Philosophy. I could only reply that I had neither; I was only a layman who loved Christianity. I therefore consider it very important that people do not make ex-cathedra judgments without studying the point of view of the dialogue partners.

The second day of the conference saw me reading a paper on "Transcending Tautology and Contradiction" in which the notion of creation was inclusively transcended in favour of the Absolute of Advaita and of Mahayana Buddhism. This was with a view to accommodating different traditions for the sake of inter-religious harmony. Hearing my presentation, an old Catholic priest could not contain himself and he stood up and shouted, "Mr. Rao is so persuasive that if we keep company with him, we will lose our religion." I quickly stepped to the mike and announced solemnly, "Father, forgive him for he knows not what he is saying." Roaring laughter followed! I narrate this incident as an object lesson in dialogue work—one cannot please all people at all times!

I could participate in similar conferences held in 1981 and 1991 in Kerala. These conferences were organised by Fr. Albert Nambiaparambil (a student of Fr. De Smet). I would like to record here that all such conferences were only meant for the elite. The participants constituted a motley group of laity and clergy, educated and uneducated in matters of theology and philosophy. They were not only from India but from abroad also. Most of the time one had to listen to speakers waxing eloquent on their pet theories. The programmes had no transformative content. The speeches were mostly

[6] Swami Ātmānanda, *Śaṅkara's Teaching in His Own Words* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1989).

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sound and fury, signifying nothing. As Fr. De Smet remarks about such conferences, "often interminable discourses of little interest had to be sat through, quaint ideas or incoherent arguments tested the listener's patience."[7]

Common prayers arranged on an ad-hoc impromptu basis could not create sacred resonances due to lack of proper ambience. Participants also went to their own chapels, mosques or temples during the conference itself to say their prayers. So far I believe we have not been able to work out creatively a meaningful programme for such prayer sessions. It might have been possible for a charismatic leader like Mahatma Gandhi to have achieved some success in this, but inter-religious dialogue organised by lesser mortals has not succeeded in this regard. Another important point is whether in the name of inter-religious harmony, we should use so many words. I am reminded of a quote from a recent book on management.[8] "The Lord's Prayer contains 56 words, the Gettysburg Address 261; the Ten Commandments 297; the Declaration of Independence 300, and a recent U.S. Government order setting the price of Cabbage 26,911."

I retired from Government Service in 1985. I came into contact with Fr. Nambiaparambil who had become by then the Secretary for Dialogue under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI). He requested me to help him as a resource person on Hinduism. He took me to many places in India where he arranged inter-religious meetings. I went to many Catholic seminaries in India for such dialogue work. The professors in these seminaries found me a valuable dialogue partner and they appointed me as a visiting professor of Indian Philosophy/Spirituality. I am engaged in this teaching work till today. My work involved going round in India from Kochi to Calcutta, teaching classes consisting of one or two credits on different aspects of my religion. Some of these courses I do straight out of standard text books on Indian Philosophy accepted by Indian universities. At other times, I have had to innovate. For example, in one seminary I was asked to improvise a course on "Indian Spirituality," whatever the term meant! At another seminary, I was asked to do a course on Hinduism as part of a pastoral orientation programme for final year theology students. I do these in my own way. Since I

[7] See Richard De Smet's paper "Interphilosophical and Religious Dialogue" in *Pilgrims of Dialogue*, p. 2 (note 1 above).
[8] Al Reiss and Jack Trout, *Positioning* (Warner Books, 1986), p. 13.

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am asked again and again to do such courses, I believe that the highly qualified seminary professors have found these courses useful for their students. I must confess here about the abysmal ignorance of these students in matters concerning Hindu religion. I try to make my courses as relevant as possible to their own vocation, emphasizing ortho-praxis. The short time given to such studies, the lack of previous exposure to such topics and the apparent irrelevance of the subject in their day-to-day mission work have made much demands on my innovative skills. My only purpose in doing such capsule courses is to transform the students. I don't try to pump in encyclopaedic information. Therefore, there is a demand on their part to be highly receptive and spiritually sensitive. The *guru-sishya sampradāya*, or the tradition of a qualified teacher and a qualified student coming together in an intimate way, is necessary for such transformation to take place.

Unfortunately modern Catholic seminaries are huge institutions. It has become necessary to standardise the methods of training and to find means for the professors to handle students in large numbers. The seminarians tend more and more to be mere boys without natural vocation, sent for training by their families. The community of seminarians has become less an association of mature men with spiritual interests and more an ecclesiastical boarding school for adolescent boys.

Becoming a Catholic priest nowadays appears to be like becoming an engineer or a lawyer. It is just like any other secular profession. In fact I must confess that many Brāhmins do not look upon the Catholic priests as "holy men" despite the ethical, philanthropic and educational works of Christian missionaries. Orthodox Brāhmins even today look upon spirituality and morality as two levels of existence. Since I am a follower of the Advaitic tradition, I have always had to distinguish between Dharma (Ethics) and Moksha (Liberation) very meticulously to the seminarians. And I always insist on the need of intense contemplative prayer on the part of the Catholic priests. Religious formation on a large scale, as is being done in Catholic seminaries, is likely to result in the deterioration of the high personal standards of holiness characteristic of the founding saints of many Christian congregations. Added to this, the enormous time spent by the seminarians in abstruse intellectual pursuits keep them so busy that seldom do they get time for quiet contemplation. In an atmosphere like this, to teach subjects like Yoga or Vedānta becomes

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rather a difficult job. The experiental content of these subjects tends to be forgotten despite my best efforts to pass on the original insights of the great *ṛṣis* or seers who had actually lived out these truths in their own lives.

My own work in the field of intra-religious dialogue for the past thirty-five years has been teaching Advaita Vedānta to Hindu groups, mainly belonging to the Ezhava Community which has been raised to the present status by the efforts of Śrī Nārayana Guru. This community had to fight for their rights against domination by upper-caste Hindus. Strangely enough they have accepted a Brāhmin like me as a good teacher and show genuine respect towards me. I am called regularly even now for conducting one-day retreats for Ezhava groups. Often these groups are constituted by not less than hundred people. At times the number would go up to five hundred or even a thousand. Work with these groups is quite easy. For I need only teach Advaita Vedānta, using a relevant text by Śrī Nārayana Guru. Here again is a good working principle for intra-religious and inter-religious dialogue. Partners should base their contribution on accredited texts and they should be reverently affiliated to an historical or mythic person. Partners should show their faith commitment, the reasonableness of their truth-claims and the impact of this person or the teachings in general, on their own lives. If Nārayana Guru can be a rallying point for Ezhavas, Jesus Christ can be a rallying point at least for all Christians. But unfortunately the phenomenon "One-Christ Many Religions"[9] still continues making even intra-religious dialogue within the Christian community rather a difficult affair. In fact, Jesus Christ is not the monopoly of Christians. Both these are teachers of humanity (*jagad-gurus*). They have something to say to the human being as such without reference to caste, creed, or race. Both are truly ecumenical. But I doubt very much whether this fact will be recognised in the near future. Humanity's track-record in the matter of inter-religious dialogue does not warrant any other conclusion.

Apart from the groups mentioned above, I have been in dialogue with another group of Christians. This homogeneous group is constituted by Catholic theologians, mostly professors in seminaries. I have been invited to the theological and philosophical meetings of this group. Most of the time, I would be the only Brāhmin present

[9] S. J. Samartha, *One Christ, Many Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991).

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in the group. I found in many such meetings Catholic theologians discussing Hindu doctrines. I remember one such meeting in the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) in Bangalore, India, in 1988. I was the only Brāhmin participant. The theme was "Sharing Worship" (*Communicatio in Sacris*)[10] I presented a paper on the subject from the Hindu perspective. I was also asked to conduct an evening meditation in the main chapel of NBCLC. Other Catholic priests like Frs. Arulswamy, Vempeney, Manickam, Vikrant and Sara Grant also touched on dialogue with Hindus.

Interaction with such academic groups brought me into contact with the prolific literature produced by Christian theologians on Advaita Vedānta and allied topics. So many Catholic priests have taken their doctorate working on these topics. I still wonder why these Christians have shown so much interest in this field. Correspondingly, I don't think Brāhmin professors have even cared to study in depth Christian theology. I also found that at the academic level, theological terms which have an extreme fluidity and rarely a definite connotation in the Hindu tradition are being loosely transposed into the Christian theological matrix in an attempt perhaps to make Christianity more palatable to Indian taste. One is amused when one reads the ponderous doctoral dissertations by Catholic priests in which they try to equate Trinity with Trimurti or Sat-cit-ānanda or to establish Jesus Christ as the best *avatara*! Added to this, the Catholic theologians seem to have lost the original simplicity of their tradition. They do theology using abstruse technical terms.[11]

Another aspect which struck me was the new emphasis on inculturation. Catholic priests in India are trying to adopt Indian ways of spiritual life. This has been criticized by certain Hindu fundamentalists.[12]

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[10] *Sharing Worship* (Bangalore: National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1988). See my paper "Communication in Sacris Seen from the Perspective of Hindus," pp. 580–596.

[11] On this point see Prof. R. C. Zaehner, *Concordant Discord* (London: Oxford, 1970), p. 17. "Modern theology with its ridiculous labels—crisis theology, dialectical theology, religiousless Christianity, death of God theology, Krisis, Kairos and heaven knows what else—with its fraudulent introduction of obsolete words masquerading as something new in order to convince the simple-minded that these words clothe a new idea—Kerygma for preaching 'hermeneutics' for exegesis, theology has become the passionate pastime of the few, a ponderous game that leaves the many absolutely cold."

[12] See, for example, *Catholic Āśrams: Adopting and Adapting Hindu Dharma*, ed. Arun Goel (Delhi: Voice of India, 1988): "The mission strategists are now making Christianity drop its alien attire and get clothed in Hindu cultural forms. . . . The

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I have also entered into dialogue with Catholic nuns. This has been comparatively easy for me. I have been invited to conduct retreats for one or two days for these groups. I teach them the basics of Vedānta. I base my course mainly on the Bhagavad Gīta since the text appeals to them. Krishna—Christ concordance as worked out by some Catholic theologians like De Smet, Vempeney,[13] etc. have been of use to me in my work. Since these nuns are more interested in the interior life, in a practical way, they find that they can learn a lot from Brāhmanical spiritual practice. At any rate it is gratifying to note that they have found Vedānta quite useful.

So far I have been speaking about my dialogue with Christian groups. I would like to mention also my interaction with Catholic individuals. As I stated earlier, Vedānta teaching is normally imparted by the teacher to his immediate student, after studying his personality, his intellectual, moral and emotional qualities. I would like to cite here only two cases. Five years ago, a young Catholic from Seattle, Washington met me at a public talk I was giving on Vedānta. After the meeting, he expressed the desire to learn more about Vedānta. I permitted him to come to my home regularly and to learn the subject first-hand. I found that this young man had led a fast life. He had left the U.S. and gone as far as Australia. There he managed to procure a pleasure yacht. He and his friends, both male and female, were on a tour of the world. All these young people were drug-addicts. They had drugs on board the yacht. So, when they reached Kochi, they were caught by the local customs officials. The yacht was impounded, and a criminal case was launched against the young man who was the captain. His friends were allowed to go. It was in this condition that the young American met me. He took from his bag copies of the Bhagavad Gītā and the Upaniṣads. I asked him to put aside these books. I taught him the Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount and also introduced him to the writings of St. John of the Cross. He took lessons from me for three months

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fullfilment will be when converts to Christianity proclaim with complete confidence that they are Hindu—Christians." See the Preface by Sita Ram Goel.

[13] See Dr. Ishanand Vempany, S. J., *Kṛṣṇa and Christ* (Gujarat Sahitya Prakash Anand, India, 1988). Richard De Smet has several papers on the subject. See, for example, "Jesus and the Avatara: Dialogue and Syncretism," ed. J. D. Gort et al. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), and "Gita/Gospel Convergencies—Sevartham" (paper presented at the Sarvav Dharma Sammelam, April 11–12, 1987, Pandharpur, Maharashtra).

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and then he left me. After three months, I got a letter from him in which he told me that he had joined his family in Seattle, that he was working in a workshop, and he was attending church regularly. He thanked me for changing his life. This incident shows the possibilities of inter-religious dialogue for transforming a human being.

About two years ago, I met a graduate student of Religious Studies from Lancaster University, England, at the Dharmaram Seminary in Bangalore India, run by the CMI Fathers. I had gone there for an international inter-religious meeting. This young man wanted to study Śaṅkara Vedānta with me. I invited him to my home in Kochi. He came after a month and stayed with me for two days. I got for him the needed books, including David Godman's book on Ramana Maharshi. He said he had the book in England and he had never realised the importance of it. After a few months I got a letter from him from England and I quote here a few lines from his letter—"You may like to know, Mr. Rao, that I recently graduated with honours. My degree was the best in the department (high first class) and my dissertation, 'The Illusion of Maya: A solution to the problem of the status of the world in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta,' received the highest mark in the 30 year history of the department. . . . So it appears that your showing an interest in me was quite well-founded. Perhaps one day I can send you my Ph.D. thesis wherein you can read what you already know." Teaching Śaṅkara Vedānta is a simple affair, provided the student has faith in the teacher and is willing to listen. The above case history bears this out. It also shows that Śaṅkara Vedānta is meant for any normal human being living anywhere in the world.

A third case of interaction at the individual level was with a young Swami of the Rāmakrishna Mission. I was staying between 1969 and 1972 in Kalady, the traditionally accepted birth place of Śaṅkara. There is a temple dedicated to Śaṅkara there, so also a temple dedicated to Śārada, the goddess of Wisdom. There is also a small Vedapadasala or Vedic School. All these are managed by the Pontif of the Sringeri Śaṅkara Mutt. There is also a Brāhmanical enclave, (*agrahāram*). Some hundred years ago these institutions were run properly. There were competent pundits. Today, these institutions are run by people who simply give lip service to Śaṅkara. In the Brāhmin village, you will not find a competent pandit who can teach Śaṅkara Vedānta. The Kānchi Śaṅkarāchārya, wanting his name also to be associated with Ādi Śaṅkara, has built a tower in which you can see

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frescoes showing the main events of Śaṅkara's life according to standard hagiographic accounts. Similarly the Rāmakrishna Mission, to show that they also owe allegiance to Śaṅkara, have a mission centre, primary school, high school and hostel for harijans and a beautiful meditation hall with a statue of Śrī Rāmakrishna. The only service the mission has done for Śaṅkara is that they have published reliable English translations of his important works. A young swami of this mission centre studied Śaṅkara Vedānta for three years. I taught him the Bhagavad Gītā, and the Bṛhadāraṅyaka Upaniṣad, with the commentaries of Śaṅkara. This was a fruitful encounter, for the dialogue partner was an ordained monk, committed to life-long celibacy and spiritual life. Even now, whenever the swami meets me, he shows his debt of gratitude to me.

In the light of such varied experiences gained by me in teaching Śaṅkara Vedānta during the last thirty five years, I would like to present the basic features of Śaṅkara Vedānta in part II of this paper.

II

Before I place Śankara-Vedānta in the context of inter-religious dialogue, I would like to clarify certain basic issues regarding dialogue itself. Dialogue is an interpersonal or inter-subjective activity for realising certain goals. Śaṅkara-Vedānta insists therefore, that

a. There must be a well-defined subject matter (*vishaya*)
b. This must have relevance to the goal (*sambandha*)
c. This goal itself should be specified (*prayojana*) and
d. The dialogue partners must be qualified enough to participate in the dialogue (adhikārins).

In brief, the universe of discourse is a selective or restricted one with regard to the subject-matter and the participants.

What then is the *prayojana* of Śaṅkara Vedānta? It is *mokṣa* or total liberation. If you ask, liberation from what, the answer is from *saṃsāra* or the aimless wandering in birth/death cycles and suffering untold miseries. A person who desires *mokṣa* is called a *mumukṣu*. Thus one of the criteria for entering into dialogue with Śaṅkara is this desire for *mokṣa*, i.e., *mumukṣutva*. Freedom here means "freedom from" and not "freedom to."

This freedom should, *by definition*, be total or ultimate. It must also be eternal or timeless. This *stipulative definition* gives another criterion

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for entering into dialogue viz, the ability to discriminate between the transient and the eternal. (*nitya-anitya-vastu vivēka*) in a general way. We can distinguish two kinds of eternity: unchangingly eternal (*kutastha nitya*), and changingly eternal (*pravāha-rupa nitya*). To cite an example, the river Ganges is *pravāha-rupa-nitya*. The river bed, relatively, is *kutastha-nitya*.

The above "freedom from" implies freedom from craving (*kāma*) or desire for securing objects for oneself here or elsewhere (*iha-amutra-phala-bhoga-virāga*). Thus the emphasis is on "being" and not on "doing" or "having." This places a severe demand on the dialogue partners and implies certain other qualities on their part, such as control of mind and senses (*śama and dama*), turning away from sense objects' (*upa-rati*), forbearance (*titikṣa*), concentration (*samādana*), and faith (*śraddhā*). The stress is on *interiority* based on faith in the scripture and in the teacher. "Inter-religious dialogue" sometimes goes under the banner of "inter-faith-dialogue." I will explain later the specific role of faith[14] in Śaṅkara Vedānta.

Śaṅkara insists that liberation has meaning only when it is experienced during one's own life-time (*jīvan-mukti*). Liberation after death (*vi-deha mukti*) can only be hypothetical or conjectural. It lacks experiential certitude. Hence this cannot become a "topic" for dialogue. Phenomenal involvement (*bandha, saṃsāra*) and liberation are antithetical. But the presence of the phenomenal world and liberation are not. It is thus possible to enjoy liberation, here and now, without waiting for death.

History records that many who subscribed to Śaṅkara Vedānta have in their own lives achieved this liberation. All the teachers quoted in part I of this paper were such *jīvan-muktas*. In the direct pontifical tradition of Śaṅkara, one can mention the names of Śrī Chandrasekhara Bharati (1892–1954), the pontif of Sringeri Śaṅkara Mutt, and Śrī Chandrasekharendra Saraswati (1894–1994), the pontif of Kanchi Kāmakoti Śaṅkara Mutt. One of my reasons for preferring Śaṅkara to Rāmānuja or Madhva is that he alone admits *jīvan-mukti*. The other two posit a hypostatic Vaikunta, where one goes to enjoy Vishnu face-to-face. This promise obviously does not solve my problems here below!

Did Śaṅkara discover this possibility of *jivan-mukti* all by himself or did he follow a tradition in the matter? The answer is that he

[14] On the subject of "faith," in the Brāhmanical tradition, see, K. L. Seshagiri Rao, *The Concept of Sraddhā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974).

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has only followed the Vedic tradition. He has also followed earlier teachers whom he calls knowers of tradition (*sampradāya-vit*). He also warns, "Himself deluded, he confounds others; for he has not had the discipline of right traditions of scriptural knowledge. He is guilty of rejecting what is taught (*śruta-hani*) and dogmatically constructing something new (*aśrutakalpana*). Hence, one who is thus ignorant of right traditions, even though versed in all disciplines deserves to be rejected as an ignoramus)."[15] Śankara's orthodoxy thus restricts his universe of discourse in the inter-religious context.[16]

What are the traditional sources from which Śaṅkara has drawn his inspiration? They are the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā, and the Brahma-sūtras. Together they are known as the *prasthānatraya* (or *trayī*), the triple-canon of Vedānta. A dialogue with Śaṅkara means a careful study of his commentaries on these texts. This in turn will involve textual exegesis. Śaṅkara himself is an exegete. This discipline is known as *mīmāṃsā* or reflection. A group of persons, doing this kind of reflection is called a *mīmāṃsā-pariṣat*. Hence inter-religious dialogue in this context becomes such a *pariṣat*.

The last word of all these canonical texts is *mokṣa*.[17] Śaṅkara does his exegesis only with reference to *jīvan-mukti*. This is his bias. Hence, his interpretation may appear to be incomplete or partial. The semiotic exercise can be done at the levels of syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics. Śaṅkara uses the first two levels only for the sake of the third level, which in his case, is the *jīvan-mukti* level. The rest of the texts is of no interest to him.

What then is the subject matter for the dialogue and what is its relation to the aim of *jīvan-mukti*? In the Upaniṣads we have the key proposition "All this indeed is Brahman."[18] Corresponding to this,

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[15] Śankara's commentary on Bhagavad-Gītā XIII.2. See Srimad Bhagavad Gita Bhāsya, A. G. Krishna Warrier, tr. (Madras: Sri Rama Krishna Mutt, 1983).

[16] See the excellent paper by Sara Grant, "Śaṅkara's Conception of Śruti as a Pramāṇa." *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures*, ed. D. S. Amalorpavadass (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1974), 340–359. See also K. S. Murty, *Reason and Revelation in Advaita Vedānta* (Delhi: Motilal Benarsidass, 1974): "Hinduism is as exclusive as the Semitic faiths and brooks no rivals. So modern exponents of Hinduism should make it explicit that such statements as 'All religious are true' are made only on their own authority and do not represent the orthodox Hindu tradition" (p. 219). On the same point, refer to Harold Coward, *Sacred Word and Sacred Text* (Delhi: Indian Books Centre, 1992), pp. 105–129.

[17] See Śaṅkara's comments on Brahmasūtra IV.4. 22; Chāndogya Upaniṣad VIII.15.1; Bhagavad Gītā XV.6.

[18] Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 2.

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we have in the Bhagavad Gītā, "All is Vāsudeva."[19] In both these statements, the term "all" (*sarvam*) refers to the material object of the science on which dialogue is to be based. I use the term science broadly to mean a certain organised body of knowledge and having its own material or formal objects. The classical Sanskrit term for this science is Brahma-vidyā, as it deals with Brahman. The term Brahman or Vāsudeva is the formal object. The subject matter of a particular science ought to be that which is not already known, is not contradicted, and is not treated of in any other science. Thus, in Brahma-vidyā, the unknown (*a-jñātam*) Brahman is the *vishaya*, and this Brahman when properly known (*jñātam*) is the *prayojana.*

The material object of Brahma-vidyā embraces all being, whether material or immaterial, actual or possible, past, present, or future or beyond time itself.[20] The proposition "All is Brahman" is a universal affirmative proposition, in which the predicate term will appear undistributed if the subject term "all" is taken only in its actual and present setting. For the actual present does not exhaust the possibilities of Brahman. The emphasis here, however, is on the formal object, Brahman, which is a singular entity. Though this formal object is in a certain sense a restricted aspect, nevertheless it is an aspect presented in every being. The unity of Brahma-vidyā is due to this formal object and this unity is the unity of order. Brahman is a first premise or principle, logically underivable and represents an original knowledge. The first principle is first in the logical, metaphysical or theological order, and not in the temporal order. Hence the proposition "All this is Brahman" is axiomatic, normative, and incorrigible. This first principle is called the *tattva* and he who *habitually* operates on the basis of this principle is called a "*tattva-darśin.*"[21]

Thus statements in the canonical texts relating to Brahman alone are taken into account by Śaṅkara. The statements dealing with Brahman in these texts appear in direct and indirect forms, and often other entities are used as part of pedagogic strategy to point out (*lakṣayate, na tu uchyate*) Brahman in unusual ways. As an exegete doing Brahma-mīmāṃsā, Śaṅkara harmonises (*samanvaya*) these statements so that all these ultimately refer to one and the same formal

[19] Bhagavad Gītā VII.19.

[20] Read the comments of Śaṅkara on Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 1 and 2 along with his introduction.

[21] See Śaṅkara's commentary on Gītā II.16.

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object admitted into his universe of discourse. Since Śaṅkara is primarily interested in Brahman per se, he is a theologian par excellence and not a mere philosopher as he is usually taken to be. I am happy, therefore, that Father De Smet has given the title "The Theological Method of Śaṅkara" to his doctoral dissertation. One must also remember that Śaṅkara does theology only in the interests of *jīvan-mukti*. To quote Śaṅkara himself, "Neither is it the function of Śruti to inform us about the manifestations (of the world), its formation and similar topics. For we neither observe nor are told by *śruti* that the welfare of man depends on those matters in any way."[22]

Failure to distinguish between this formal object and the material object will result in total confusion. For example, see what havoc will result in our social and religious life if the following stanza of the Gītā is interpreted without caring for this subtle distinction.

"In a Brāhmin endowed with wisdom and humility, in a cow, in an elephant, as also in a dog and in a dog-eater, the wise see the same" (Brahman).[23]

Śaṅkara in his commentary on this stanza accepts the three *guṇas—sattva, rajas* and *tamas* of the Sāṃkhya system as the differentiating factor among objects at the empirical or non-transcendental level (apara-Brahman). But para-Brahman is free from these *guṇas*. This constitutes the definition of Brahman as such or in Śaṅkara's terminology, *nirguṇa*-Brahman, which is immutable. Therefore, he says, "the sages are trained *habitually* to perceive the same, single and immutable Brahman, wholly unaffected by constituents like the *sattva* and by the latent impressions they generate." Quoting a text dealing with moral science (*dharma-śāstra*) Śaṅkara says that at the empirical level such equality is not permitted, and he clarifies that the above stanza refers only to those who have gone beyond the level of *dharma* and who live at the level of *mokṣa*.[24] When in dialogue with Śaṅkara therefore one should remember that he is primarily interested in *nirguṇa*-Brahman. This again restricts the scope of dialogue. Some western scholars like Hume and R. C. Zachner have confused these levels of *dharma* and *mokṣa*. I am glad that S. C. Crawford[25] and Julius Lipner[26] have correctly presented the situation.

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[22] Śaṅkara's Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya 1.4.14.
[23] Bhagavad Gītā V.18.
[24] Śaṅkara's comments on Gītā V.18 and V.19.
[25] S. C. Crawford, *The Evolution of Hindu Ethical Ideals* (Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1984), pp. 47–50.
[26] Julius Lipner, *Hindus* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 213–214.

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The science of nir-guṇa Brahman is not a practical science. It is not chiefly concerned with what men can do, as in the case of moral science. The proposition "All is Brahman" should give us the hint. For this is an affirmation in the indicative mood and not in the imperative or subjunctive mood. The proposition is categorical, and makes an assertion and implies the absence of any condition or reservation of any kind. It looks neither before nor behind. It rests in itself and is intrinsically complete. In Śaṅkara's idiom, it is *vastu-tantra* (based on "what is") and not *puruṣa tantra* (based on human action). What the statement demands is an act of assent. Giving this assent does not involve directly any action, physical or psychological. All this is explained meticulously in Śaṅkara's commentary on the first four sutras of the canonical text "Brahma Sūtras."[27] This position is reiterated in his commentary on the last stanza of the 15th chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā. The Gītā itself refers to the teaching here as "the most secret" (*guhya-tamam*). Dr. Nataraja Guru (1875–1973) a direct disciple of Śrī Narayana Guru, in his commentary on the above stanza, has kept up the tradition.

> In other words, by understanding the full import of this chapter as intended by the author, there is no need anymore either to follow the injuctions of the Vedas or to tax one's brain by any further philosophical enquiry. Matters of obligatory duties and theoretical research are both here terminated.[28]

Such transcendence of ritualistic action (*yajña*) is formally done in the Brāhmanical tradition by discarding the sacred-thread (*yajña-upavīta*) which I mentioned in part I of this paper. The *gāyatri* meditation is done for the last time and this also is transcended. There is an excellent passage in Śaṅkara's commentary on the Īśa-Upaniṣad, wherein he asserts his total freedom "Oh sun, get rid of your normal form consisting of brilliant rays. Come to me in your most auspicious form. But I don't request you as if I were your servant. Because I know that the same Brahman/Ātman/purusha dwells in you and me."[29] Here again, by emphasizing the formal object and ignoring the peculiarities of the material object, one gains freedom.

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[27] Consult *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śaṅkarācārya*, Swami Gambhirānanda, tr. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965) or a free rendering by R. Das, *Introduction to Śaṅkara* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1968).

[28] The Bhagavad Gītā, Natarāja Guru (Kerala: Nārayana Gurukula Publishing House, 1989), p. 613.

[29] Śaṅkara's commentary on Īśa-Upaniṣad, Mantras 15 and 16.

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This is again another reason for my great respect for Śaṅkara who has "saved" me from so many Brāhmanical obligations.

It is one thing to know that there is *ṇirguṇa* Brahman from scripture on faith. This knowledge is only mediate—not directly experienced. Therefore it is called *para-akṣa-jñāna* (knowledge beyond the eye, using the term "eye" to represent or symbolise direct experience). What we need is direct experience of *nirguṇa* Brahman i.e., *a-para-akṣa-jñāna* (non-mediate knowledge) or non-mediate experience (*a-para-akṣa-anubhūti*). Herein comes *yoga-śāstra* based on Brahma-vidyā. Bhagavad Gītā is a *yoga śāstra* in this sense. Kaṭha Upaniṣad calls it *adhyātma yoga.* Gaudapāda calls it *Asparśa-yoga* (lit. yoga of non-touch).[30] This yoga should be clearly distinguished from yoga according to Patañjali which is based on the Sāṃkhya system and not on Brahma-vidyā. Yoga means union, and complete union can be had only at the level of nirguṇa Brahman. The question therefore is whether such a level is experienced by anybody. The simple answer given by the Upaniṣad is "yes" and the texts add quietly, "Daily in sleep." For example here is the commentary by Śaṅkara on Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI.8.1: "For the knowers of Brahman do not admit attainment of its own nature by the individual self in any state other than deep sleep."[31] Again, the same Upaniṣad later (VIII.3.2) says, "As persons who are ignorant about treasures do not get the treasures of gold even while walking over it again and again, so also all these creatures do not know Brahman although they reach daily (during sleep) this Brahman which is the goal, because they are deflected by falsehood."[32]

This experience of deep sleep, available to everybody, everywhere, is taken as normative and made use of to indicate the nature of mokṣa. As Prof. Hiriyanna hints, "the state of *mokṣa* seems to be only dreamless sleep hypostatised."[33] Why do we take sleep as normative? Earlier, I had indicated that at the level of *mokṣa*, only "being" is stressed and not "doing" or "having." In sleep there is

[30] See the excellent monograph on the subject by Colin A. Cole, *Asparśa Yoga* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982).

[31] The entire sixth chapter should be studied with Śaṅkara's commentary, as this forms a good introduction to the subject.

[32] Chapter 8 of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad also contains the dialogue between Prajāpati and Indra, which will be helpful for understanding this paper.

[33] *Indian Conception of Values* (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1975). See the footnote on p. 251.

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only mere being and no being-in-the-world. Ramana Maharshi with his characteristic simplicity states this fact as follows: "In deep sleep man is devoid of possessions, including his own body. Instead of being unhappy he is quite happy. Everyone desires to sleep soundly. The conclusion is that happiness is inherent in man and not due to external cause. One must realise the self in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness." But one should not therefore desire to be always in sleep. In the first place it is impossible, for it will necessarily alternate with the other states. Secondly it cannot be the state of bliss in which the *jñāni* is, for his state is *permanent* and not alternating. Moreover, the sleep state is not recognised to be one of awareness by people, but the *sage is always aware*. Thus the sleep state differs from the state in which the sage is established. Still more the sleep state is free from thoughts and their impressions on the individual. It cannot be altered by one's will because effort is impossible in that condition. Althought near to pure consciousness, it is not fit for efforts to realise the self."[34]

In other words, the purpose of introducing sleep here is to use it only as a paradigm to be applied in the *waking state*. One can enjoy the benefit of sleep even while other conditions prevail in the waking state. Even while awake, one can behave *as if* one is asleep.[35] The critical analysis of the waking, dream and deep sleep constitutes the core of Śaṅkara Vedānta. A great deal of literature is available and it is impossible to summarise all the arguments in a short paper like this.[36] The method of analysis is called *avasthā-traya-vichāra* (reflection on the three states of experience) to catch hold of the witness of the three states (*sākṣi*). This witness is *kutastha nitya*, a term already explained. And whatever is other than this witness is *pravāha-rupa*

[34] *"Be as you are:" The Teachings of Sri Ramaṇa Maharṣi*, David Godman, ed. (London: Arkana, 1985), pp. 17 and 23.

[35] See the excellent manual "Astavakra Samhita," Swami Nityaswarupananda, tr. (Calcutta: Advaita Asrama, 1990) used by Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa for teaching Vivekananda. See also "Tripura-Rahasya" (esp. chap. XVI) used by Ramaṇa Maharṣi for teaching purposes. Tr. A. V. Vasavade—Chowkhamba, Sanskrit series, Varanasi, India, 1965.

[36] The following references will be useful: K. A. Krishnaswamyer, *Vedanta or the Science of Reality* (Bangalore: Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya, 1991); D. B. Gangolli, *The Magic Jewel of Intuition* (Holenarsipur: Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya, 1986); Sri Swami Satchidānandendra, *The Method of the Vedānta*, A. J. Alston, tr. (London: Kegan Paul International, 1989); W. M. Indich, *Consciousness in Advaita Vedānta* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980).

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nitya, and by definition, is stipulated to be *a-nitya*, non-eternal. The basic awareness, which constitutes the real nature (*svarūpa*) of the witness is alone called "*jñāna*" by Śaṅkara. Thought which is there only in the waking state, due to the cortical activity of the brain, is referred to as "*citta-vritti*" and this is distinguished from *jñāna*, another term for which is "*cit*." *Citta-vritti* is something accidental to the self. It is a limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) constituted by the psycho-physical complex. Following Sāṃkhya, this complex is made up of the three *guṇas*. This basic "*cit*" is termed the fourth, *turya* (or *turīya*). This number is used as a pedagogic device, treating waking, dream, and deep sleep, serially as 1, 2 and 3. The best Upaniṣad that deals with this problem is the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.[37] Fortunately Gauḍapāda, the grand perceptor of Śankara, has a commentary (Kārikā) on this Upaniṣad and Śaṅkara has written a commentary (*bhāṣya*) on the Upaniṣad and the Kārikās. In the Śaṅkara Vedānta tradition it is stated that the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad *alone* is sufficient for liberation.

In his classical work Upadeśasāhasrī[38] Sankara has stated his position clearly: "No perception, whether in waking, dream or deep-sleep, belongs to me but is due to delusion. For these have no independent existence nor an existence depending on the self. I am therefore the fourth which is the seer of all the three states and without a second."

Thus in the context of inter-religious dialogue, the purpose of Śaṅkara Vedānta is to point out this *turya*, or pure *cit*, or *jñāna* as the only means for achieving *jīvan-mukti*. Śaṅkara has followed the strict definition of Gauḍapāda "*Turya* is ever existent and ever all-

[37] The following references may be consulted: *The Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad*, Swami Nikhilananda, tr. (Mysore, India: Sri Rāmakrishna Ashrama, 1968); *The Āgama Śāstra of Gaudapāda*, V. Bhattāchārya, ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989); S. S. Roy, *The Heritage of Śaṅkara*, (Allahabad, India: Udayana Publications, 1965); Swami Satchidānandendra Saraswati, Māṇḍūkya-Rahasya-Vivriti (Holenarsipur: Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya, 1958). It is unfortunate that Richard De Smet has not accepted the authenticity of Śaṅkara's commentary on this Upaniṣad.

[38] Upadeśasāhasrī X.4, Swami Jagadananda, tr. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, 1961). Sengaku Mayeda has also critically edited this work. See *Śaṅkara's Upadeśasāhasrī. Critically Edited with Introduction and Indices* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1973). According to Mayeda, "The study of Śaṅkara has mostly centred around his chief work, the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, and his commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*. In comparison with these great works the *Upadeśasāhasrī* is a minor one. It is, however, the only independent, non-commentary work that can safely be attributed to him . . . In my opinion, there is no better introduction to Śaṅkara's philosophy than the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, especially its prose part." (Preface, p. xi).

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knowing." Ramana Maharshi explains this by a simple example. "The three states come and go but you are always there. It is like a cinema. The screen is always there but several types of pictures appear on the screen and then disappear. . . . On the screen you sometimes see a huge ocean with endless waves, that disappears. Another time you see fire spreading all around that too disappears. The screen is there on both occasions. Did the screen get wet with the water or did it get burnt by the fire? Nothing affected the screen. In the same way, the things that happen during the waking, dream and sleep states do not affect you at all. You remain your own self."[39]

The Maharshi is only explaining the Upaniṣadic statement that the self is *a-sanga* (unattached) and *kutastha nitya*.

I have heard during some inter-religious meetings *turya* being defined as a *fourth state*. I have also heard *turya* being identified with the *nir-vikalpa samādhi* of Patañjali yoga, attained through the supression of *citta-vrittis*. Such ideas are extraneous to Śaṅkara Vedānta. Ramana Maharshi has clarified this issue. "Our real state is turya which is always as it is and knows nothing of the three states of waking, dream or sleep. Because we call these three states (*avasthās*), we call the fourth also the *turya-avasthā*. But it is not an *avasthā* but the real and natural state of the self. When this is realised we know it is not a fourth state, for a fourth state is only relative but *turyatita*, the transcendent state."[40]

One must understand the term "*cit*" clearly; otherwise, as Betty Heimann[41] has pointed out, one will think that "India has put forth the most subjectivist, solipsist, or egoistic systems within the whole history of world-philosophy." *Cit* as used here refers to nirguṇa Brahman, which is trans-individual. To clarify the point, an illustration, which can be traced to the Upaniṣads (Brihadāraṇyaka III.1.4) may be of use here. It is of the two antithetical terms "day and night." Now day and night imply each other, limit each other and are therefore both finite. But their distinction as the scripture says (*na-udeta, na-astemeta*) is transcended when we regard them from the standpoint of the sun who may be taken as the symbol of eternal day. That is, the phenomena of day and night necessarily point to the sun where it is all day; and this eternal day is nothing but the

[39] See reference 34 above, pp. 14–15.
[40] Ibid., p. 16.
[41] *Facets of Indian Thought* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. 49.

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elimination of the night and, at the same time, the breaking down of the limitations of the day as known to us, or as we might otherwise put it, sublimating it. For to the ever-luminous sun, there can be no night, nor ever any day in our sense of the word. Similarly, in the present case, it is *cit* in its sublimated form that transcends both (*cit* and *acit*). *Acit* is but an appearance of it, and *cit*, as known to us, is a limitation of it. It is this primary *cit* or Brahman which according to Advaita explains the whole of the universe looked at from one standpoint viz., that of knowledge. When we rise above the finitude of *cit* and *acit*, both alike disappear, though in quite different ways as in the case of day and night. The one is explained; the other is explained away.[42]

Similarly the term "*sat*," (being) used with reference to *turya*, should be understood clearly. When denying *sat* (being) of the nirguṇa-Brahman, Śaṅkara does not mean that the denial is quite the same as that which is meant when *asat* (non-being) is denied of it. The latter is denied absolutely; but the former while it cannot certainly be predicated of it, is, in his opinion, such as to give us a conjectural insight into its true nature. That is, though nirguṇa Brahman does not *exist* and is therefore not *sat* in the ordinary sense of the term, it has transcendental Being, of which we have an inkling in existence as we know it. *Turya* therefore is not an existent knower (*jñāta*) but only *jñānam*, which is transcendental Being. The individual can merge in it, provided he is willing to lose his existent status as a knower.

Thus, to realise the turya, one need only get the insight that one is not the body but the eternal ātman. Here is Śaṅkara on the point:

> The knowledge of one's identity with the pure Self that negated the wrong notion of the identity of the body and the Self sets a man free even *against his will* when it becomes as firm as the belief of the man that he is a human being (identifying himself with the body). All this, therefore, is established. And reasons have been already given by us.[43]

The reason for our missing *turya* in our ordinary life is explained by Śaṅkara: "The self gets identified with whatever is seen in the world. It is for this reason that an ignorant man does not know himself (to

[42] I am indebted to Prof. M. Hiriyanna for clarifying the issues. See reference 33 above, pp. 143–144.

[43] Upadeśasāhasrī IV, 5, Jagadananda translation (see note 38). My emphasis.

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be Brahman)."[44] Another reason is also given by Śaṅkara. "People do not receive self-knowledge on account of the fear that their duties (according to their castes and orders of life) would be destroyed like Udanka who did not accept (genuine) nectar, which he thought was urine."[45]

In his Brahma-Sūtra Commentary Śaṅkara quotes from an earlier teacher usually identified as Sundara-pandya.[46]

> Moreover they (the knowers of Brahman) say, "When on the realisation of the sat-Brahman, as I, the body, son etc, become sublated and consequently the secondary (*gauṇa*) and false (*mithya*) self cease to exist, how can there be any action? The self can be a knowing agent earlier than the rise of the complete knowledge of Brahman that has to be sought for but when the search has been finished, the knower freed from the defect of sin becomes one with the entity arrived at through the search. Just as the idea of the body as the self is accepted by the wise as valid postulate (for empirical dealings), similarly these empirical means of knowledge are accepted as valid till the direct knowledge of the self dawns.

A careful reading of the above quotes will show that Śaṅkara speaks of immediate or instantaneous release (*sadyo-mukti*) as the fruit of self-knowledge.[47] This *sudden enlightment* is attained through hearing (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*) and contemplation (*nidhidhyāsana*).

One should not get confused that *sadyo-mukti* in the above context implies immediate death. For realisation takes place at the transcendental level and this does not interfere with the natural empirical process of life. As the Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha puts it, "the nature of *jīvan-mukta*'s life is such that action fallen in the empirical flow continues by its own natural dynamism."[48] No one can possibly doubt that Śaṅkara himself was a *jīvan-mukta* before he began teaching. He himself has confessed this. "There need not be a dispute about

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[44] Ibid., XII.2.

[45] Ibid., V. (1) The following is the story about Udanka. "He practised much austerity to please Vishnu so that he might get nectar from him. Vishnu was pleased and sent Indra with a pot full of nectar to give it to Udanka. Indra wanted to deceive him and in the guise of a chandala (out-caste) he hung the pot containing nectar from his waist. The pot was hanging in such a way that urine would fall into it if Indra were to make water. When he appeared before Udanka in that fashion and offered him the nectar the latter thought the pot contained urine and refused to accept the nectar." Tr. Jagadananda.

[46] See reference 27 above, pp. 44–45.

[47] Śaṅkara-Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya 1.1.12 and Gītā Bhāṣya 5.27 and 8.24.

[48] From stanza 4 of the Arjuna-Upākhyāna of the Yoga-Vāśiṣṭha.

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whether the enlightened sage will preserve his body for sometime or not. How can one possible deny another's personal experience or realisation or (his reason for) preserving his body? This is precisely what is implied when the scriptural passages set out to describe the characteristics of the liberated sage."[49] In this connection, Arvind Sharma's statement[50] "thus Ramaṇa may be said to be the chief spokesman of experiential Advaita just as the philosopher Śankara (788–820) is looked upon as the leading expositor of doctrinal Advaita" can be misleading.

From the above discussion, it will have become clear that nirguṇa-Brahman refers to that which is self-evident (*svayam-prakāśa*) and immediately present. It does not imply a search for the other elsewhere. The fruit of this inquiry is immediate realisation and does not wait for an eschatological verification. Faith leads to knowledge and knowledge in turn leads to peace.[51] The usual *faith in a person*, valid in the context of discursive meditation, is here transcended. If one is to achieve sudden enlightenment one must have faith which affirms that one is *already* nirguṇa-Brahman. This knowledge is called by Śaṅkara *parā-bhakti* (supreme devotion).[52] In inter-religious dialogue Śaṅkara is sometimes dismissed as a mere intellectual. But he is really a supreme devotee who does not yearn any more for Brahman but who rests in nirguṇa Brahman. As the Upaniṣad puts it, "A knower of Brahman becomes Brahman."[53] "A knower of Brahman attains the transcendent."[54] We thus know nirguṇa Brahman by transcending the knower-known polarity. Technically, in Brahma-vidyā, we are said to transcend "tri-puti" or the tripartite split "knower-known-knowledge." We may regard this as a *leap from epistemology to fundamental ontology*. But neither the intellect nor the senses can help us in this. For we are no longer at the transactional level of name, form, difference and action.

We started the discussion at the level of inter-subjectivity and we have now ended up with trans-subjectivity. Can therefore dialogue

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[49] Śaṅkara, Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya 4.1.15.

[50] *The Experiential Dimension of Advaita Vedānta* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), p. xiv.

[51] Bhagavad Gītā, IV.39. In this connection, it will be useful to consult Sung Bae Park, *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985). The distinction of two kinds of faith is applicable *mutatis mutandis* to Śaṅkara Vedānta also.

[52] Commentary on Bhagavad Gītā, 18.55.

[53] Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.2.9.

[54] Taittirīya Upaniṣad—Brahmānandavallī: Brahmavid apnoti param.

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be possible? The correct answer is that silence (*mauna*) is the only proper language. Yet all the canonical texts are in the form of dialogue either explicit or implicit. In the Upaniṣads we find dialogues such as that between Yājñavalkya and King Janaka, Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyi, Nachiketas and the God of Death (Yama), Uddālaka and his son Śvetaketu, Narada and Sanatkumāra, Prajāpati and Indra, etc. The Bhagavad Gītā is a dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna. The Brahma-Sūtras constitute an implicit dialogue with other systems of thought. Thus the source books of Śaṅkara Vedānta assure us that the "*tattva*" can be communicated. The use of ordinary language for this purpose involves certain conventions or innovations. John Grimes[55] has elaborated on this and I have no intention to dilate on the topic here.

In conclusion, I can say that the place of Śaṅkara Vedānta in contemporary inter-religious dialogue is a unique one. "Ramana Maharshi was once asked by a somewhat cynical seeker: 'Do you have anything to offer to me?' 'Yes,' Ramana is supposed to have said, putting aside the comic book he was reading. 'But do you think you can take it?' "[56]

My experience in the field of inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue for the past thirty-five years has only confirmed the Maharshi's doubt.

OM TAT SAT

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[55] *An Advaita Vedānta Perspective on Language* (Delhi: Indian Book Centre, 1991).
[56] See reference 50 above, p. 101 (conclusion).

In addition to the specific references given above, the following may be consulted:
1. Natalia Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Indian Book Centre, 1993).
2. G. C. Pande, *Life and Thought of Śaṅkarācārya*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994).

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THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE ADVAITA OF ŚAṆKARĀCĀRYA

Sara Grant

I. Prolegomena

For this Festschrift in honour of the unofficial guide of my doctoral studies I have been asked to reflect as a human being and a Christian theologian on the value of my study of Ādi Śaṅkara in the multi-religious context of the world of today.

If this reflection itself is to have any value, it clearly demands a pragmatic and down-to-earth approach, so I would like to make it plain from the beginning that this study has been for me no merely theoretical enterprise: the discovery of the authentic teaching of Śaṅkara meant for me the resolution of a long existential struggle for survival as a thinking religious animal—a struggle for integrity and the integration of the need for both intellectual clarity and synthesis and consistency of thought and life with the ineradicable gut-level conviction that ultimate Truth could never be fully grasped or conceptually expressed by the human mind.[1] This was a dilemma for me not only as a human being in the secular context, but also as a Christian wrestling with the at least apparent dualism of traditional Christian theology and life-commitment in a religious congregation whose self-understanding was strongly marked by that theology and a deep spirituality which was however at that time couched in the language of the early nineteenth century. My discomfort was further compounded after my arrival to India by the incontrovertible experience of the presence and action of the Spirit in men and women beyond the frontiers of the visible Church, such as Visvanath Swamiji, the cousin of Sri Ramana Maharshi, who told me on my second visit to Tiruvannamalai in the seventies: "The silence of the man of understanding (the *jñāni*) is a dynamic silence—everywhere is bliss. It is the ego which spoils everything. Awareness

[1] I have described this struggle at greater length in my Teape Lectures of 1989: *Towards an Alternative Theology: Confessions of a Non-dualist Christian*, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 1991.

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of that bliss is a perpetual *tapas*[2] which is of benefit to the entire world." He was himself a man of deep silence. One could go and sit with him for long periods with no word spoken and come away with a sense of having touched the Eternal in the fleeting Now of time.[3]

In fact my coming to India in 1956 gradually brought to full awareness in me a fundamental way of being and thinking which I had hitherto experienced as a rather uncomfortable, obscure and unorthodox genetic twist (there was nothing in my upbringing to account for it) and gave it a specific context and respectability in the age-old Hindu classification of spiritual paths in terms of temperament and the predominance of a natural drawing to either *jñāna* of contemplative wisdom, *bhakti* (loving devotion), or *karma* (dedicated service). This however precipitated a further crisis of faith beyond anything I had yet experienced. It was sparked off by my meeting with Swami Abhishiktananda (the French Benedictine Henri le Saux) who was still under the impact of his encounter with *advaita* in the person of Sri Ramana Maharshi, whom he had met not long before his death. Like Abhishiktananda himself, I was completely overwhelmed by a sense of ultimate reality which seemed to relativise everything—all "names and forms," in the traditional Hindu phrase, all images and concepts, all myths and symbols. In spite, or perhaps because, of my simultaneous involvement in post-Vatican II Church renewal and theological reflection, this encounter with living nondualism in the Swamiji hit me like a bomb. What had struck me, surprisingly enough, as somehow repellent on a first superficial reading of the Mountain Path, the journal of the Sri Ramana Ashram, I now recognized as insidiously and dangerously connatural, rousing all the old craving for an absolute and ultimate unity which would justify the relativising of all conceptualizations, even the most sacred. I could not see how to argue with this enemy within the gates, so large a part of me affirmed its truth.

All my ancient questionings reawakened: the apparent preoccupation of Christianity with "names and forms," the suspicion of the apophatic way of prayer then still largely prevalent in the Church, the increasingly obvious inadequacy of the prevailing manner of presenting Christ as the only way of salvation, the intolerable caricature

[2] *Tapas*: religious austerity or penance.
[3] So Boethius spoke of the "*nunc stans*" of eternity in the "*nunc fluens*" of time.

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of God the Father at least implicit in the "satisfaction" theology of redemption, not yet repudiated, and the accompanying near-absolutizing of the deified humanity of Christ, which sometimes seemed, at least in practice, to make the incarnation an end in itself. All this was further complicated for me by some of the effects on my own congregation of the renewal of religious life launched by Vatican II, in particular the giving up of cloister and all that was considered "monastic" in favour of a more outgoing, secular and active life style, all of which seemed to go counter to the inner thrust towards the desert and "knowledge of things in their ultimate causes,"[4] the mystery beyond all name, and the stability of a basically contemplative way of life. I was in fact still subject to bouts of an acosmism which I had not yet learnt to recognize as more dualist than non-dualist in character. I had a sense of being on the verge of some tremendous discovery, full of risk and danger—literally *tremendum atque fascinans*, exhilarating and irresistible yet obscurely terrifying.

It was in this somewhat turbulent frame of mind that I began my serious study of the *advaita* of Śaṅkarācārya.

II. Clearing the Ground

I had already encountered Śaṅkara some ten years earlier when I began teaching the history of Indian Philosophy in Sophia College, Bombay, but although it was clear to myself and my students that there was here some tremendously important intuition, we found it impossible to discover from the text books and reference works exactly what this was. They gave the general impression that Śaṅkara was a "world-negating pessimist." We felt this was unjust and extremely frustrating. When therefore I was asked to undertake doctoral research in any area of Indian philosophy I chose, I knew immediately what I must do—learn enough Sanskrit to go back to the original text of Śaṅkara, and discover what he really said. As I had no idea of what research had already been done in this field, I wrote to Dr. R. V. De Smet and asked his advice. He suggested that I should explore Śaṅkara's concept of relation: this was, he felt, the key to the whole of his thought. He also told me to read L. Krempel's exhaustive

[4] Aristotle's definition of wisdom.

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work on relation in Thomas Aquinas,[5] as he thought the fundamental insight of Śaṅkara on relation was strikingly similar to that of Thomas, and added that the crucial term for understanding Śaṅkara's own peculiar concept of relation was *tādātmya*—"having *That* as one's Self." I emerged from the encounter feeling like a minnow floundering in the Atlantic, but I had found a steadfast friend whose comments would be invaluable to me in the years that followed.

Having set to work on Sanskrit, the next step was to ascertain with the help of competent authority, living and dead, which of the vast number of works attributed to Śaṅkara were authentic and relevant to my purpose. I finally settled for the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, the Upadeśasāhasrī, the Commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, and all the Upaniṣadic commentaries attributed to him except those on the Śvetāśvatara, certainly inauthentic, and the Māṇḍūkya, together with the accompanying Kārikā. The verdict on the last two texts was especially crucial, since they more than others lend themselves to the "world-negating" interpretation of Śaṅkara and are quoted almost to the exclusion of all others by supporters of that interpretation. (For the record, I came to the conclusion, for several reasons, that their authenticity is indeed extremely doubtful.)[6]

The gist of Śaṅkara's teaching is contained in the two following passages; "In the beginning this was Being alone, one without a second . . ." (Ch. Up. VI.ii.1). "The supreme transcendent Reality created the entire universe without the help of any substance other than himself and entered into all beings for the sake of Self-realization. And having entered there he realized directly his own Self, as 'I am this Brahman'" (Ait.Up.Bh.II.i.intro.). For Śaṅkara, as for me, the "inquiry into Brahman," or *brahmajijñāsa*, was no mere theory, but a very practical matter, for, like the true teacher whom he describes in the *Upadeśasāhasrī* (I.6), he had "the sole aim of helping others, and a desire to impart the knowledge of Brahman only," convinced as he was that this knowledge was the supreme good for human

[5] L. Krempel, *La Doctrine de la Relation chez Saint Thomas*: Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1952.

[6] On this point see Thomas E. Wood, *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad and the Āgama Śāstra*, Monographs of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, University of Hawaii Press, 1990. Wood thinks that the Māṇḍūkya commentary is by a later (13th century?) advaitin who tried to reconcile *advaita* with Buddhism, whose views entered the *advaitin* scholastic tradition and influenced it towards the acosmism later associated with it.

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beings, the *paramapuruṣārtha*. He was therefore confronted by the problem of the One and the Many, which had so baffled the Greek philosophers, in a peculiarly acute form, not least on account of his uncompromising acceptance of both the objective validity of the manifold given-in-experience at the level of our ordinary awareness and the exigencies of his own *ātmānubhava* or experience of the Self, fully corroborated by the insistence of *śruti* that Ātman-Brahman is not only one, but one-without-a-second, totally transcendent and untouched by any shadow of alteration. Plato had already shown in a different cultural context that, although a dialectical hierarchy of names and forms might prove satisfying from a purely logical point of view, it could not solve the existential problem of the *chorēsis* or gulf between the Eternal and the non-Eternal.[7] In India as in Greece, the ultimate question must always be that of the relation between the supreme unchanging Reality and the world of coming-to-be and passing away, the eternal Self and what appears as non-Self, including the individual human person. No epistemology can stand secure as long as this question remains unanswered.

Reliance on experience and recognition of the legitimate autonomy of the various branches of human knowledge within their proper fields is central to the *advaitin* understanding of the structure of being or existence and the ultimate destiny of human beings. It is therefore crucially important to recognize that Śaṅkara was a moderate realist with a healthy respect for the evidence of the senses and reason which led him to declare that if any number of *śruti* passages stated that fire was dark or cold, they were not to be understood literally, for *śruti* has no authority in these matters, which fall under the *pramāṇa* of perception.[8] On the other hand, he also maintained with equal firmness that "reason renounces all claim to autonomy in the realm of ultimate knowledge,"[9] namely the knowledge of Brahman in itself and as the final goal of human existence. This latter dimension of experience is not ordinarily accepted as evidence by scientists and philosophers, even unofficially as human beings, though paradoxically enough there is a growing suspicion in the scientific world that there may after all be limits to the range of human intelligence. Whether or not one accepts Śaṅkara's conviction that *śruti*

[7] Though it was of course left to Aristotle to point this out.
[8] Cf. Bh. G.Bh VIII.66; Br.S.Bh. I.iv.10.
[9] Cf. Br.S.Bh.II.i.31.

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or the mediation of "one who knows" gives access to a non-conceptual knowledge of ultimate reality to which human beings left to themselves have no entry, and which is self-authenticating, it has to be taken seriously into account in attempting to comprehend the position of a man whose interpretation of the fundamental truth of existence is both rooted in this conviction and securely earthed in the world of everyday experience.

III. The Centrality of Relation

Dr. De Smet had offered me Śaṅkara's concept of relation as the key to his thought. As soon as I put it to the test, I found that it turned easily in the lock. The apparent antinomy between the *ekamevādvitīyam* of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad and the incontestable multiplicity of beings left him undisturbed: cf. Br.S.Bh. II.2.38: "'How do you (Vedāntins) establish the relation of cause and effect between the Lord and the world?'—'For us there is no difficulty as the relation we assume is that of *tādātmya*'" (usually translated—imprecisely—as "identity").[10]

Śaṅkara formulates his understanding of this relation in terms of what he calls *upādhis* or limiting adjuncts, *nāmarūpa*, or names and forms; "Name and form are the limiting adjuncts of the supreme Self, concerning which, when they are differentiated (i.e., when they have come into being), it is impossible to tell whether they are identical with or different from it. It is name and form in all their stages that constitute this relative existence" (Br.Up.Bh.II.iv.10). In other words, names and forms are the correlates of conceptual thinking, the "objects" of the *vyāvahārika* level of experience. (Note the crucial importance of the impossibility of distinguishing the *upādhis* from Ātman-Brahman at the *vyāvahārika* level, the metaphysical foundation for which is their radical *ananyatva* or "*not-otherness*" in the sense of "*not existing apart from*" Brahman (Br.S.Bh.II.i.14)).

This *ananyatva* entails neither pantheism nor dualism, because the relation between Ātman-Brahman and the *upādhis* is one of non-reciprocal dependence, i.e., a relation in which a subsistent effect of "relative absolute" is dependent on its cause for its very existence as

[10] This imprecision, and the common rendering of *ananyatva* as non-difference, have contributed in no small measure to the misunderstanding of Śaṅkara in the English-speaking world and beyond.

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a subsistent entity, whereas the cause is in no way dependent on the effect for its subsistence, though there is a necessary *logical* relation between cause and effect—that is, a relation which is perceived by the mind when it reflects on the implications of the existence of the cosmos. For example, in the case of the reflection of the sun in a pool of water, the existence of the reflection depends on the sun, but the sun does not depend on the reflection, though the mind is compelled to recognise a relation between it and the reflection. There is a hierarchy of *upādhis* or *nāmarūpa*: "Although one and the same Self is hidden in all beings, movable as well as immovable, yet owing to the gradual rise in excellence of the minds which form the *upādhis* (of the Self, i.e., finite beings which appear to diversify it) *śruti* declares that the Self reveals itself in a graduated series of beings, and so appears in various forms of dignity and power. So for example golden ornaments and figures of gold are not identical with each other, but only insofar as gold constitutes the self of both" (Br.S.Bh.IV.i.4, see also Tait.Up.Bh.II.ii.i). The relation of *upādhis* or created beings to each other is one of *tādātmya* only insofar as one mediates to another the dynamic creative power of Brahman (as with the *koṣas* in the passage from the Taittirīya Upaniṣad referred to above)[11] but this is not always the case; for example, pots made of the same clay are not dependent on each other for their existence or qualities though they may be related by contiguity, similarity of shape, and so on (Tait.Up.Bh., loc. cit.). Neither Śaṅkara nor the Upaniṣads nor any non-dualist metaphysician or theologian, including Aquinas, has attempted to describe or explain how the *upādhis* or *nāmarūpa* constituting the *vyāvahārika* would come forth or emanate (*emanare* is Aquinas' term) from the *ekamevādvitīyam*. They simply draw out the implications of *śruti* corroborated by experience. As God pointed out to Job, human beings can never expect to be in a position to do more.

[11] The passages on the *koṣas* are of great importance for an understanding of Śaṅkara's thought on the structure and relation to Ātman-Brahman of both the macrocosm and the microcosm of the human person. It is a matter of some astonishment to me that modern psychologists have not recognized the potential of this model for the development of a thoroughly holistic understanding of human nature and its integral relation to the rest of the cosmos.

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IV. Authenticity of This Understanding of Śaṅkara

Some may legitimately question the competence of a Christian to offer a valid interpretation of one of the greatest traditions of Hinduism, just as Christians might question the competence of a Hindu to interpret the Gospel. It may therefore be in order to say that although some Hindu scholars who are still mistrustful of modern methods of textual study and exegesis would not accept the interpretation given here,[12] I have several times been deeply humbled by the openness with which it has been accepted in Hindu circles. Some twenty years ago Swami Krishnanandaji of the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh invited me to speak at the evening *satsang* on Śaṅkara's concept of relation and its implications. At the end the presiding Swamiji commented that it was "*extraordinary*—almost incredible—that a *Christian* should have such understanding of Śaṅkara." Krishnanandaji himself insisted that my thesis should be published. For various reasons this was not done, and when I returned to Rishikesh seventeen years later, he immediately asked what had happened, saying that it was very important and urging me to further action.[13] An old Panditji who used to come to the Christa Prema Seva Ashram in Pune where I was for nearly twenty-five years found the typescript in the library, and having read it expressed his warm agreement and added: "You have not only studied, but taught us something! This is now a place of *jñāna* as well as of *bhakti*." I had similar experiences in the Sri Ramana Ashram at Tiruvannamalai and nearby Tapovanam, the ashram of the late Gnanananda, the Guru of Abhishiktananda's "Guru and Disciple."

In philosophical circles in India Dr. De Smet, to whom I am so much indebted, has long been respected by many as a pioneer and authority in this field, and it is increasingly coming to be realized that a return to the sources does indeed reveal a rather different Śaṅkara from the "world negating pessimist" of university text-books and popular opinion—one for whom the *vyāvahārika* world is only potentially illusory, insofar as it may conceal, as well as reveal, the ultimate Self-shining Reality from our bat-like gaze.

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[12] To understand this, one should see it against the background of the reactions of devout Christians, including theologians, in the early days of modern biblical criticism and evolutionary theory.

[13] As a result it has since been published as *Śaṅkarācārya's Concept of Relation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999).

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V. A Teaching for Our Times

One of the greatest needs of contemporary human beings, as human beings, in India as in the West, is to see for themselves that the realm of the spirit and the realm of ordinary life—economic, scientific and technological development, personal and international relations, educational and social problems, in short, the whole *vyāvahārika* level of experience, are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Moreover, "man come of age," in Bonhoeffer's phrase, is keenly allergic to a God who has to keep "coming in from outside" to do for himself; yet the conquest of outer space, atomic energy and the rest have deepened rather than destroyed man's sense of his own insufficiency. The technological age has not resolved the conflict between our sense of achievement and our ineluctable contingency but rendered it more acute. The ancient antinomy may be stated in new ways, but it remains essentially the same: how can the existence of an omnipotent ultimate mystery be reconciled with the freedom of man, an all-embracing causality with the spontaneous initiative and self-determination which lies at the very heart of human self-hood?

For Śaṅkara, as for the seers of the Upaniṣads, the whole universe down to the tiniest molecule is penetrated through and through by the Bliss of Brahman. For him, as for the Gītā, "in every agent He is the Agent" and the very diversification of human experience is in varying degrees of intensity the revelation of the Presence. Precisely because *nirguṇa-Brahman*—God as he is in himself, devoid of all qualities—is the absolutely transcendent yet immanent Ground of all creatures, it is he himself who makes possible the *free* play of all their powers:

> The same light which shines beyond all things,
> beyond the universe,
> beyond the worlds, above which there is nothing further
> is also the very light which shines within the heart of man.
> (Ch.Up.III.xiii.7)

> He shines, and everything shines by him; in his light
> all things become luminous. (Muṇḍ.II.ii.10)

For Śaṅkara, therefore, it would be absurd to say that Brahman—God—limits human initiative or freedom; he is their necessary condition. The free act of man is wholly man's yet wholly God's—*advitīya*, non-dual.

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In twenty-five years of constant reflection on the human predicament with men and women from many countries and practically every religious or spiritual tradition as well as a great number who would lay claim to no religious or spiritual affiliation at all, I have found that Śaṅkara's approach makes very good sense to the modern or post-modern mind, and provides an excellent basis for a profound and unself-conscious sharing of insights across the boundaries of race, nationhood or belief, often making it possible to reconcile different points of view, not by canceling out one or the other, but by transcending both in a fuller synthesis.[14] For this however, the reflection has to be pursued in a peaceful and deeply meditative spirit: since if we are to overcome our natural tendency to fight to the death in defense of our own relative absolutes, we need to touch or be touched by the Absolute itself. As Śaṅkara well knew, we cannot exist without the security of some absolute and are therefore really incapable of letting our own conceptualizations go unless we have felt this touch, however inchoate and fleeting, of the fullness of Being which is beyond all name and form, which both relativizes every created name and form and affirms it in its relative autonomy. This is not merely an intellectual exercise; it touches the very core of our being.

VI. Advaita and Christian Theology

One of the things that has struck me most forcibly in the last thirty years or so is the intellectual confusion that has arisen as a result of the flowering of various forms of dialogue between people of different spiritual and religious traditions, ranging from the more academic studies of scholars and the growing interest of monks, nuns and other religious professionals in each others' spiritual paths, to the invasion of the East by Western seekers, not to mention the efforts of the Church in different countries to "inculturate" herself.[15]

[14] A privileged place and time for this was for many years the Christa Prema Seva Ashram, Shivajinagar, Pune, at the *satsang* held nightly each year during the week preceding the Easter Vigil, based on the Biblical readings for the Vigil and passages from the Indian scriptures which dealt with the same themes of creation, original sin or *avidyā*, and the irrepressible hope that springs in the human heart—the prophets and the Bhagavad Gītā: with Lord Krishna's assurance that he would come to the rescue.

[15] The problems were not only in the local Churches. It was, and remains, very difficult for people of one culture to accept with equanimity the attempts of those

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Closely related to this inter-religious dialogue is the considerable awakening in both East and West to the possible affinities between modern science—especially post-nuclear physics—and Oriental ways of meditation: it has been suggested that the apophatic quality of the experiences of both scientists and practitioners of meditation points to some kind of relation between them, even perhaps one of identity.[16]

Until fairly recently there seemed to be very little effort on the part of theologians to bridge the cultural divide between East and West and engage in common reflection on these and other fundamental questions such as the implications for the Church of the existence of revelation, and scriptures regarded as revealed, in religious traditions other than Christianity, or the challenge posed to the theistic religions by, for example, advaita and Buddhism. In the face of all this, and the curiously relativistic attitude assumed by some theologians regarding the mutual relations of different religions (curious, because relativism seems singularly unsatisfactory as a final solution for the thinking mind) we surely need an integrated view of human beings and their destiny which will not eliminate differences in approach, nor yet regard them as ultimates, but rather reconcile them in a transcendent unity. For this we need a point of reference which will itself transcend and yet be related to every specific belief-system, and indeed every dimension and branch of human experience and knowledge.

As I have said elsewhere,[17] I think that in the last analysis the greatest contribution an *advaitin* has to offer contemporary Christian theology is not to devise yet another method of theologizing (although in a sense he cannot help offering this by his very manner of proceeding), but to bring to the gatherings of theologians that piercing metaphysical insight into the structure of existence which constitutes the essence of *advaita*, and by its very nature finds itself contextualized in every human situation, restoring to humanity that awareness

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of quite different cultures to express their faith in their own cultural terms. This has sometimes made it very hard for Roman officials in the Church to understand contemporary African and Asian theologians, among others.

[16] F. Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London: Collins, 1975) was a pioneering work in this field.

[17] Cf. my Teape lectures, already referred to pp. 7–8. I have drawn extensively on these lectures in this paper. See also the paper "A Plea for a Metatheology" in: *In Spirit and In Truth: Essays Dedicated to Fr. Ignatius Hirudayam, S. J.*, ed. Ignatius Viyagappa, S. J. (Madras: Aikiya Alayam, 1985) pp. 169–184.

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of the depth-dimension of life on the earth in all its aspects, for lack of which we seem to have lost our sense of direction and ultimate purpose.

I have already pointed out that the approach of Śaṅkara is ultimately in harmony with the Christian understanding of human life and destiny,[18] and I have repeatedly found that the effort to reincarnate, as it were, Christian revelation in terms of *advaita* is an illuminating and richly rewarding task. I do not however, think that the most immediately urgent task for Christian theologians today is to adopt a comparative approach, focusing piecemeal, as it were, on such questions as the apparent lack of any place in Śaṅkara's *advaita* for the communion of love between the Lord and the creature which lies at the heart of Christian revelation, or the collective dimension of the final freeing and transforming of created reality, or even the role of Jesus himself and the very possibility of a historical and redemptive incarnation. I am convinced that these questions can be met, although not by a one-to-one parallelism which would obliterate differences of perspective. They are immensely important, and must obviously be considered in due time, but this should not be undertaken prematurely. They will fall into perspective almost of themselves for anyone who has seriouly and humbly undertaken in a spirit of discipleship the study of both *advaita* and Christian revelation in their sources, accepting the painful but life-giving death and rebirth of being touched by the burning flame of "that True outside of which no truth has place," as Dante says,[19] and which can be reached by no merely human effort, but only, as Śaṅkara rather surprisingly puts it, by "praying for this consummation to the exclusion of all else."[20] The gift can however, be prepared for by a steady effort to bring one's whole life into harmony with that True. This

[18] A comparison of the main points of the teaching of Śaṅkara and Aquinas makes this quite clear in principle, and also reveals a difference of emphasis, in that, whereas Śaṅkara stresses the *via negativa* and the absolute transcendence of Brahman without however, in any way undermining his immanence, in Thomas one is always aware of the coming forth of creatures from God and their return to their Source in the Word in whom, as John says, everything comes to be. Yet Thomas was himself so overwhelmed by the unutterable Mystery of God at the end of his life that he left his greatest work unfinished. This point can be made rather differently by saying that the Gospel radically lived leads straight to *advaita*, or, from the other angle, that the perfect practical hand book for living out the Gospel is *advaita*. (cf. Teape, p. 30).

[19] Paradiso IV, 126.

[20] Muṇḍ.Up.Bh.III.ii.3.

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is something that should be pondered seriously in seminaries, theologates, and schools of divinity, for to tackle specific theological questions without undergoing at least some beginning of awakening to this experience would be to risk remaining at the level of "names and forms," at which differences can never be fully reconciled.[21]

Conclusion

Anyone familiar with the thought of Aquinas, especially with his theology of creation and his commentaries on the *Mystical Theology* and *Divine Names* of Dionysius the Areopagite may be tempted to ask at this point if the challenge of *advaita* cannot simply be reduced for Christians to an exhortation to return to the study of St. Thomas with a greater alertness to the non-dual and apophatic dimensions of his theology.

From my own personal experience, I do not think so. I have found, and still find, that the *advaita* of the Upaniṣads and of Śaṅkara challenges my Christian "faith seeking understanding" in at least three ways, all of which are I think relevant to the Churches in today's world:

1. By its uncompromising insistence on and spelling out in detail of the demands the theological quest makes on a human being: one cannot "do" theology as one may "do" mathematics or history or any other branch of academic or practical study. Unless our lifestyle and value systems are in harmony with the Truth we are pursuing, we cannot hope for real enlightenment.

2. By the starkly apophatic character of the Upaniṣadic teaching regarding the supreme Reality, a dimension which has been heavily overlaid in Christian tradition in recent centuries, and yet appeals so strongly to people today, starved of transcendence and mystery. The keen sense of this transcendence and the *relative* non-being of all created things which the so-called "advaitin experience" opens up can shatter our comfortable self-assurance. I think that, paradoxically enough, our generation needs this experience both to counter-balance our easy assumption of the all-importance of this

[21] Those responsible for Christian liturgy and charismatic prayer groups would also do well to ponder this: how far do the structures of our worship open up to those who partake of the "depths of God," in Paul's phrase, and how far do they tend to keep them at the level of the rather stereotyped "names and forms?"

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world, and also to give us back a sense of hope in an ultimate meaning for our daily lives beyond the range of our present mental grasp. We hear much less today of heaven, hell, purgatory and judgement than in the past, because, one suspects, no one knows what to say of them any more: there is a real crisis of credibility in this area. We badly need a reminder that, as Paul well knew, "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man," what God has in preparation for us. A firm and trusting admission of a healthy agnosticism might go far to stem the tide of disillusionment created by taking for granted as sufficient for people today the myths and symbols which satisfied older and less sophisticated generations than our own, who moreover recognized them for what they were—myths and symbols which had to be accepted in simplicity to reveal the hidden treasure they enshrined. Too often they are regarded merely as fairy-tales. The advaitic approach could help us towards a more realistic eschatology on the lines of the "realized eschatology" of John's Gospel,[22] but couched in a non-religious language more accessible to a secular age.[23]

3. By the Copernican revolution which would be brought about in our theological expression of our faith if we adopted as basis "God" as the immanent yet transcendent Self instead of the "God up there" or "out there" of traditional imagery to whom modern humans find it increasingly difficult to relate. We have to face the fact that God literally "up there" is for most people no longer either culturally or theologically possible. Theology needs to be reborn in every age and culture in terms of contemporary human experience. It is in fact this very experience that it is reborn in the light of faith and of the faith-experience of earlier generations. Formulations of

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[22] This strongly marked the early Church—the sense of eternal life as already begun even now, "*gratia semen gloriae, inchoatio vitae aeternae*," "grace the seed of glory, a certain beginning of eternal life," in Thomas' phrase.

[23] This would greatly facilitate a profoundly illuminating reading of the Gospel of John, from the Prologue onwards to the tremendous outpouring of the "priestly prayer" of Jesus: like the Word himself, who comes forth from and returns to the Father in the Spirit, we are meant to awaken to his own awareness of being not only *to*, but *from* the Father, the Source without a source. This is surely the meaning of speaking of the gift of the Spirit in terms of *birth* and *sonship*. The metaphysical implication of this approach should be explored in the light of *advaita* and the *ahambrahmāsmi*. What would this *mahāvākya* have meant on the lips of Jesus? And on ours, in the perspective of John as "sons in the Son?": (cf. Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.) At the end of this paper I cite two experiences which hint at the inter-religious possibilities of such reflection.

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faith which we can recognize as perfectly valid in terms of the universe of discourse of the generation or culture in which they evolved frequently do not speak to a later age or different culture, and may even be blocks to the communication of the living message of the Gospel. I think, and I speak from a fairly considerable experience, that the non-dual tradition of Hinduism can provide us with a universally effective means of transcending the cultural and religious barriers that divide us without destroying the rich treasure of our diversities.

In 1993, at the conclusion of an ecumenical Hindu-Christian retreat-seminar held in Bangalore to commemorate the twentieth death anniversary of Swami Abhishiktananda, a greatly respected and profoundly spiritual Swamiji was encouraged by the atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding which had marked the proceedings from the beginning to ask tentatively whether the time had not now come to discard the Trinitarian terminology which in the eyes of many Hindus seems to obscure the absolute simplicity of the One-without-a-second. There was a pause as we all considered this, not quite knowing how to respond, but feeling that something had to be said, not least because the Christians among us know that many of us had had to face the same dilemma. Finally, since no one else spoke, I said that it would be difficult to give up altogether the terms "Father," "Son," and "Spirit," because they were used by Jesus himself to express his own unfathomable experience of his relationship to the Mystery beyond all name, which was the foundation of our faith. It might, however, help if we understood them in the light of Śaṅkara's *lakṣaṇā* principle of interpretation, according to which words can be pointers to a reality beyond all conceptual understandings. These words do in fact tell us something about the *ekamevādvitīyam* which that phrase itself does not suggest, namely that it has a mysterious inner dynamism, which is also obscurely hinted at in the medieval Sanskrit term *sat-cit-ānanda.* It would seem therefore that we could not scrap the terms in question without great impoverishment, any more than in the Vedic tradition we could scrap the terms *Ātman* and *Brahman*, which also point beyond themselves to a Reality only dimly apprehended in faith.

This exchange left a profound impression on me. I was especially struck by the way in which we had been led explicitly to relate the *anubhava* of the Mystery in whose luminous shadow we had lived

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together for several days to the unfathomable depths of the experience of Jesus, and by the effectiveness of an insight from Śaṅkara in resolving our apparent impasse.

Again, some years ago, an old and holy monk affiliated with the Ramakrishna Order stayed in our ashram for about ten days. His very presence communicated a sense of God. He was shown the chapel where the Eucharist was reserved, as a place where he could sit for prayer or meditation if he wished. The next morning he was up at four o'clock sitting motionless for two hours before the Lord. Later, when he was introduced to me, he said, speaking very slowly and with great emphasis: "I must congratulate you . . . on the atmosphere in your chapel. . . . There is here . . . a Tremendous Presence . . . an *immense* Sanctity. . . . I have lived in *many* ashrams . . . but *nowhere* have I found what I find here."

What becomes of differences when "deep calls upon deep?" They are simply transcended. Yet in both these instances we each remained what we were—Hindu and Christian, deeply respectful of each other's insights, yet united in an experience of *advaita* in our daily living which took us far beyond the need and scope of words. . .

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INDEX

ābhāsa 4, 97, 99
abheda 116
abhimāna 60, 60 n. 25
Abhishiktananda, Swami (Henri Le Saux) 1, 7, 7 n. 8, 149, 155, 162
ācarya 4–5
acit 144
adhibhautika 34–35
adhidaivata 34–35, 37–38
adhikaraṇa 36–37, 41–42
adhikārins 134
adhiṣṭāna 105
adhyāropa 11, 84
adhyāsa 11, 24, 52, 58, 76, 78, 90–98, 102–103, 108
adhyātma yoga 140
adhyātmika 34–35, 37–38
āditya 35
Advaita Ashram 125
Advaita-Christian encounter 10–17, 148–150, 154–155, 157–163
advitīya 156
Agni 34 n. 3, 35, 38
agnosticism 161
agrahāram 133
aham 59–61, 61 n. 26
ahaṃ brahmāsmi 59, 61, 161 n. 23
ahaṃkāra 60 n. 25, 66
Aikyalayam Ashram 8
ajñāna 93
akhaṇdatva 15
ālayavijñāna 24–26
Alston, A. J. 56 n. 10, 63 n. 29, 65 n. 33, 84, 141 n. 36
Amalānanda 38, 44 n. 16
Amalorpavadass, D. S. 136 n. 16
analogy 11, 43, 54, 54 n. 8, 59, 61, 67, 81, 99–100
Ānandabodha 90, 95
Ānandagiri 92 n. 40
ananyatva 153, 153 n. 10
angels 48, 48 n. 19, 49–50, 50 n. 23
anirvacanīya 104, 108
anitya 135
antaḥkaraṇa 68
anthropology, Vedāntic 60 n. 25
anthropomorphism 13–14
Antoine, R. 4
antyādapi 117
anubhava 152, 162
anubhūti 140
anugraha 70, 70 n. 2, 74 n. 18, 81 n. 33, 82
anukrośaṃ 70 n. 2, 83, 83 n. 47
anwayavyatireka 65, 66 nn. 35–36, 67 nn. 36–37
anvayin 25
apāna 36
aparokṣād 89
apavāda 11, 52, 67 n. 37, 84
apophatism 149, 158, 160
apūrva 42
Aquinas, Thomas 2–3, 5, 9 n. 14, 10–11, 11 n. 18, 12, 16, 48–50, 54 n. 8, 69, 151, 154, 159 n. 18, 160
Ardhavainā́sika 20
Aristotle 2, 49, 54 n. 8, 150 n. 4, 152 n. 7
Arjuna 75 n. 21, 145 n. 48, 147
Arulswamy, Fr. 131
Arurmukhas 44
asat 144
ashrams 6–7, 163
asi 56, 58–59, 68, 73
aspaŕśa-yoga 140, 140 n. 30
āśramas 117
āśraya 103
ātman 1, 11–12, 14–17, 23–27, 31, 33, 34 n. 3, 41, 44, 52, 55–56, 56 n. 9, 57–64, 64 n. 30, 66, 66 n. 36, 68, 74, 74 n. 18, 75 n. 19, 76, 78–79, 79 n. 28, 80, 80 n. 29, 82–83, 88, 90–92, 95, 100–104, 107, 114 n. 14, 122, 139, 151–154, 154 n. 11, 161–162
Ātmānanda, Swami 127, 127 n. 6
Augustine 5
auṣadham 74 n. 19
avaccheda 99–100
avasthā 37, 143
avasthā-traya-vichāra 141
avatara 122, 131, 132 n. 13
avidyā 9 n. 14, 72 n. 12, 74, 76, 91–93, 101–104, 106–108, 157 n. 14
avidyādi-doṣa 102

Malkovsky - 978-90-04-37911-4
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avidyādi-kleśa 102
avidyā-śakti 93

Bādarāyaṇa 31 n. 2, 37, 41, 50
bādha 105
Bakre, Mahadeva Shastri 52 n. 4
bandha 135
Bergson, Henri 3
bhakti 28, 146, 149, 155
Bharati, Sri Chandrasekhara 123 n. 2, 135
Bhāskara 18, 18 n. 2
Bhaṭṭa, Kullūka 117
Bhattacharya, K. C. 5
Bhattāchārya, V. 142 n. 37
bhedābheda 27
bhoktṛ 75
Bible 7, 132
Bilimoria, P. 51 n. 2
body 38–39, 48, 52, 76, 88, 101–102, 108, 113 n. 12, 114 nn. 12–13, 118 n. 20, 141, 144–146
Boethius 149 n. 3
Bonaventure 5
Bonhoeffer, D. 156
brahmacarya 55
brahmajijñāsa 151
brahman 1, 15 n. 29, 34 n. 3, 36, 44 n. 15, 45, 58, 58 n. 16, 61, 64, 64 n. 30, 71 n. 4, 72–73, 73 n. 12, 77 n. 24, 82, 114 n. 14, 136, 139, 159 n. 18, as accessible to all 42, as agent 79 n. 28, 156, as *aham* 59, 61, as *ātman* 11–12, 14, 27, 33, 44, 62, 78, 152–153, 154 n. 11, 162, attributes of 61, 92, as bliss 15, 68, 156, as Brahmin 138, as cause 11–12, 16, 35, 43, 63, 71, 74–77, 79, 95, 97, 107, as condition for human freedom 79–81, 156–157, as creator 12–13, 15–16, 85, 151, definition of 26, 51, 54 n. 8, 138, as delimiting 52, 99, as end of journey 39, 46, as first principle 137, as goal 33, 42, 68, 78, 140, 152, and God 10, 12–13, 47–48, 76, 156, 161, and gods 33, 34 n. 3, 39, 44–45, grace of 12, 82, 159, as immutable 79, 138, 159, as impersonal 14, as indeterminable 90, 94–96, 103, 108, 156–157, 162, and *īśvara* 10, 15, 42, 47, 47 n. 18, 72, 73 n. 12, 82, knowledge of 5, 28, 33, 34 n. 3, 41, 68, 68 n. 38, 75–77, 79 n. 28, 91, 145–146, 151–152, lordship of 15–16, as *nirguṇa* 13, 19, 138, 140, 143–144, 146, 156, as *para* 12–13, 13 n. 22, 15, 71–72, 138, as Person 12–15, 15 n. 22, presence of 11–12, 79, 156, 163, as primary 33, 35, 44, 48, 59 n. 22, 63, 144, in relation to world 11, 15–17, 47–48, 71, 90, 105–107, 151–153, 154 n. 11, simplicity of 16, 162, as sole reality 90, 120, and Śvetaketu 55, 55 n. 9, 58–59, as synonym of *tathāgata* 26, as trans-personal 14, as transcendent 10–11, 17, 76, 146, 151–152, 156, as ultimate state 26
Brahmanism 27–28
brahma-vidyā 91, 137, 140, 146
Brahmins 52, 109–110, 112, 113 n. 12, 115–116, 118, 121 n. 25, 122–124, 126, 129–133, 138–140
Brereton, J. P. 55 n. 9, 57 nn. 13–14
Buber, Martin 76
Buddha 21–23, 26
Buddhism 2–3, 17–18, 18 n. 3, 19–23, 24 n. 21, 26–28, 151 n. 6, 158, Mahayana 127, vedāntinization of 26–27
Bühler, G. 118, 118 n. 19, 121 n. 25
Bultmann, R. 113

cakṣuḥ 35
caṇḍāla 114–117
Capra, F. 158 n. 16
Cardona, G. 66 n. 36
caste rights 109–110
caste system 109, 111, 117, 121
Chatterjee, M. 14 n. 24
Chattopadhyaya, D. P. 16 n. 33
Chinmayananda, Swami 113 n. 12
Christa Prema Seva Ashram 155, 157 n. 14
Christian revelation 159
Citsukha 90
citta-vritti 142–143
Clooney, Francis X. 30, 31 n. 2, 40 n. 11, 41 n. 12, 43 n. 14, 50
Cole, Colin A. 140 n. 30
Cole, John 7
Collins, James 48 nn. 19, 21, 49 n. 22, 50
complementarity 12, 156
consciousness 12, 14–15, 20, 22–23, 25–26, 35, 38, 42, 60 n. 25, 64, 70

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n. 3, 76, 78, 80–81, 103, 114 n. 12, 141, 141 n. 36
Coward, Harold 136 n. 16
Crawford, S. C. 138, 138 n. 25
creation out of nothing 127
Cuttat, J.-A. 7

dama 135
Dandoy, G. 4, 4 n. 4
Dante 3, 159
Das, R. 139 n. 27
Dasgupta, S. 19
Date, V. H. 70 n. 3
dayā 70 n. 2
death 38–39, 43, 48, 48 n. 20, 134–135, 145, 147, 159, 162, and post-mortem existence 32, 45–46
Debauche, René 1–2, 2 n. 1
de Nobili, Roberto 9
De Nobili College 4–5
De Smet, Richard 1–2, 2 nn. 1–3, 3–6, 6 nn. 6–7, 7, 7 nn. 8–9, 8, 8 nn. 10, 12, 9–10, 10 n. 15, 11, 11 n. 19, 12, 12 nn. 20–21, 13, 13 n. 23, 14, 14 nn. 24, 26–27, 15, 15 n. 29, 16, 16 nn. 31–33, 35, 17, 30, 31 n. 2, 51, 52 n. 3, 54, 54 n. 8, 62–63, 63 n. 29, 67, 67 n. 37, 69, 70 n. 3, 71 n. 6, 111, 127–128, 128 n. 7, 132, 132 n. 13, 138, 142 n. 37, 150, 153, 155
Deussen, Paul 30, 30 n. 1, 34 n. 3, 50, 55 n. 9, 70 n. 3
Deutsch, Eliot 30, 30 n. 1, 50
devatā 30, 32–34, 34 n. 3, 35–36, 36 n. 5, 37–38, 38 n. 8, 39, 39 nn. 9–10, 40, 40 n. 11, 41–43, 43 n. 13, 44–45, 45 n. 17, 46–50, 50 n. 23
dharma 112 n. 8, 117, 121, 138
Dharmakīrti 24 n. 21
dharma-śāstra 138
Dhupakar, Ramchandra Shastri 52 n. 4
dialogue, Buddhist-Christian 17, 122, 122 n. 1, 157–158, Hindu-Christian 1, 6, 12–13, 132, 158, 162, inter-religious 6, 8, 10, 13 n. 23, 122, 122 n. 1, 125–128, 130, 133–136, 142, 146–147, 157–158, Muslim-Christian 7, Parsi-Christian 7, philosophical 1, 6, 19–21, 27, Sikh-Christian 7
Dionysius the Areopagite 160
Doniger, Wendy 118 n. 20, 121 n. 25
Draviḍācārya 90
dreamless sleep 92, 98–99, 140
dreams 105, 114 n. 14, 141–143
dream state 142–143
dualism 148, 153
duḥkhī 63, 66
dvandva 4

effort 75 n. 20, 77, 78–83, 141, 159
election, divine 80
ekameνādvitīyam 153–154, 162
ekatva 52
ekavākyatā 68
emanation 16 n. 31, 54 n. 8, 107
enlightenment 5, 59 n. 22, 68, 75 n. 20, 78, 81–82, 96, 100, 104, 146, 146 n. 51, 160
eschatology 161
Eternal 149, 152
Eucharist 163
Ezhava Community 130

Fa-hsien 116
faith 4, 45, 77, 116, 130, 133, 135, 135 n. 14, 140, 146, 146 n. 51, 149, 158 n. 15, 160–162
Fallon, P. 4
favor, of the Lord 44 n. 15, 81
Feuerstein, George 81
Forest Academy 6
Fort, Andrew O. 109 n. 2
Frauwallner, Erich 22 n. 18
free will 48
Fuchs, Stephen 8

Gambhirananda, Swami 75 n. 21, 77 n. 24, 78 n. 27, 80 n. 32
Gandhi, Mahatma 114 n. 14, 128
Gangolli, D. B. 141 n. 36
Garbe, Richard 18 n. 4
Gauḍapāda 22, 27–28, 84–85, 88–90, 106, 108
gāyatri mantra 123
gāyatri meditation 139
Gispert-Sauch, G. 76 n. 22
Gnanananda 155
Godman, David 133, 141 n. 34
gods 30, 33, 34 n. 3, 36 n. 5, 39, 59 n. 22
Godwin, L. 8
Goel, Arun 131 n. 12
Goel, Sita Ram 132
Gort, J. D. 132 n. 13

Malkovsky - 978-90-04-37911-4
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Gospel 6, 132 n. 13, 155, 159 n. 18, 161, 161 n. 23, 162
Govindānanda 39
Goyandaka, K. 75 n. 21
grace 12, 70, 70 nn. 1–3, 71, 72, 72 nn. 8–10, 73–74, 74 nn. 18–19, 75, 75 nn. 20–21, 77–83, 161 n. 22
Grant, Sara 7, 71 n. 5, 131, 136 n. 16, 148
Greek philosophers 152
Griffiths, Bede 1, 8
Grimes, John 147
guṇas 138, 142
guru 41, 114 n. 14, 125, 129
Guru, Śrī Nārayana 125, 125 n. 4, 126, 130, 139
Guru, Natarāja 125, 125 n. 3, 126, 126 n. 5, 139, 139 n. 28

Hacker, Paul 9, 9 n. 14, 10, 10 n. 15, 22 n. 18, 30, 31 n. 2, 47 n. 18, 50, 55 n. 9, 56 n. 9, 72, 73 n. 12, 84, 101–102, 102 n. 70, 103–104, 106–108
Halbfass, Wilhelm 9 n. 14, 30, 31 n. 2, 50, 55 n. 9, 73 n. 12, 102 n. 70
Heimann, Betty 143
Hīnayāna 24, 26
Hiriyanna, M. 88 n. 17, 140, 144 n. 42,
Hirudayam, Ignatius 8, 158 n. 17
Hume, Robert Ernest 112 n. 8, 121 n. 26, 138

Ignatius of Loyola 4
ignorance 10, 13, 31, 43, 68, 68 n. 38, 74, 74 n. 19, 76, 78–79, 84, 91–103
impartiality, divine 79–80, 83
inculturation 131
Indich, W. M. 141 n. 36
individual soul (empirical self, *jīva*) 32, 39, 39 n. 10, 46, 52, 60, 60 n. 25, 61–64, 66, 99, 103–104, 116, journey after death 39
Indra 34 n. 3, 37, 41, 44, 140 n. 32, 145 n. 45, 147
Isayeva, Natalia 147
īśvara 10, 38 n. 8, 39–40, 42–43, 45–47, 47 n. 18, 72–73, 73 n. 12, 74 nn. 18–19, 75 n. 19, 82–83, 101
iti 58, 58 n. 18
Iyer, K. A. Krishnaswamy 123 n. 2

jaḍa 103
Jagadananda, Swami 56 n. 10, 64 n. 30, 142 n. 38, 144 n. 43, 145 n. 45
jagad-gurus 130
jahad-ajahal-laksaṇā 54 n. 8, 67, 67 n. 37
Janaka 110 n. 5, 147
Javaji, Tukaram 52 n. 4
Jesuits 1–4, 7
Jesus Christ 6, 130, 130 n. 9, 131–132, 132 n. 13, 149–150, 159, 161 n. 23, 162–163
jñāna 38, 93, 140, 142, 149, 155
Jnana-Deepa-Vidyapeeth 5, 7, 51
jñāni 141, 148
jñāta 144
Job 154
Johanns, Pierre 2
John of the Cross, St. 132
John the Evangelist 159, 161, 161 n. 23
justice 73, 83, 94, 112, 115–116, 121
jyotiḥ 36

Kajiyama, Y. 19 n. 9
Kalady 133
kāma 135
Kamalaśīla 25–26
Kamiyama, S. 19 n. 9
Kanakura, E. 20 n. 12
Kānchi 133, 135
Kane, P. V. 110 nn. 4–5, 111 n. 7, 117, 117 nn. 17–18
karma 32, 42, 73, 75 n. 21, 80, 82, 110, 149
kartṛ 75
karuṇa 70 n. 2
Kāśī 113–114
Kirfel, Willibald 101
Klostermaier, Klaus 8, 109, 110 n. 3
Kodate, Yoshiaki 18 n. 3
koṣas 154, 154 n. 11
Krempel, L. 150, 151 n. 5
Krishnaswamyer, K. A. 141 n. 36
Krisnananda, Swami 155
kṛpā 70 n. 2
Kṛṣṇa 75 n. 21, 132, 132 n. 13
kṣatriyas 109, 112, 115, 120
Kumada, K. 23 n. 18
Kumārila 27
Kurisumala Ashram 7

Lacombe, O. 81 n. 34
lakṣaṇa 10, 52 n. 3

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lakṣaṇā 53, 53 nn. 5–6, 54, 54 nn. 7–8, 55, 58–59, 61, 67, 67 nn. 36–37, 162
Le Saux, Henri, *see* Abhishiktananda, Swami
liberation 10, 17, 33, 61, 70, 70 n. 3, 72–74, 75 nn. 20–21, 77, 79–80, 82–84, 87–88, 90, 99–101, 110, 134–135, 142
Limaye, V. P. 35 n. 4, 50
Lipner, Julius 2 n. 1, 14, 15 n. 28, 51, 138, 138 n. 26
logical relations 154
love 12, 12 n. 21, 16 n. 36, 76, 80 n. 32, 81, 159

MacIntosh 50, 50 n. 23
Madhusūdana Sarasvatī 101
Madhva 18, 122, 124, 135
Mādhyamika 19, 19 n. 9, 20, 20 n. 12, 21, 24
Mahadevan, T. M. P. 15 n. 29, 70 n. 3
Mahāprajñā Bodhisattva 26
Maharshi, Ramana 126, 133, 141, 143, 147–149
mahāvākya 55, 57, 120, 161 n. 23
Mahieu, Francis 7
Maitreyi 147
Malkovsky, Bradley 1, 13 n. 22, 70, 111
manana 75 n. 20, 77 n. 23, 145
Maṇḍanamiśra 27, 85–88, 93
Manickam, Fr. 131
Manu 115–118, 118 nn. 19–20, 119, 119 n. 20, 121
Marèchal, Joseph 2
Matilal, B. K. 51 n. 2
mauna 147
māyā 9 n. 14, 72, 73 n. 12, 83, 92, 94, 101–102, 104–105, 107–108
māyāvāda 18, 18 n. 1, 19, 23
Mayeda, Sengaku 18, 18 n. 1, 22 n. 18, 56 n. 10, 62–63, 63 n. 29, 65 n. 33, 70 n. 3, 81 n. 36, 142 n. 38
Medhātithi 117
meditation 7, 37, 41, 44, 44 n. 16, 75 n. 20, 77 n. 23, 82, 87, 108, 131, 134, 139, 146, 158, 163
merit 82–83, 100
metaphor 15 n. 28, 51, 51 n. 2, 59 n. 19, 66 n. 36
Mīmāṃsā 27–28, 30, 34–35, 40, 40 n. 11, 45, 45 n. 17, 50, 50 n. 23, 136–137
mīmāṃsā-pariṣat 136
mithyā 92–93
mithyā-jñāna 92, 102
mithyā-pratyaya 107
Modi, P. M. 30, 50
Mohanty, J. N. 51 n. 2
mokṣopāya 117
Monier-Williams 81 n. 33, 83 n. 47
monism 12, 26–28, 71
mukhyārtha 53, 67, 67 n. 37
mukti, jīvan- 135–136, 138, 142, *sadhyo-* 145, *videha-* 135
Mumme, Patricia Y. 109 n. 2
mumukṣu 134
mumukṣutva 134
Murty, K. Satchidananda 110 n. 5, 111 n. 6, 113, 113 n. 11, 114 n. 14, 115, 136 n. 16
Nachiketas 147
Nāgārjuna 19
nairātmya 26
Nakamura, Hajime 18 n. 3, 20 n. 12, 25 n. 25, 26 n. 28
nāmarūpa 9 n. 14, 72 n. 12, 153, 154
Nambiaparambil, Albert 13 n. 23, 122 n. 1, 127, 128
Nanjio, Bunyiu 26 n. 26
Narada 147
Narasimha 122
Nārayana Gurukula 125, 139 n. 28
Nelson, Lance E. 109 n. 2
Neoplatonists 107
nididhyāsana 75 n. 20, 77 n. 23
Nikhilananda, Swami 142 n. 37
nimitta 93, 103
nirguṇatva 15
niṣṭhā 60, 60 n. 23
nitya, kutastha 135, 141, 143
Nityaswarupananda, Swami 141 n. 35
non-reciprocal dependence 71, 153

Om 52–53, 147
Organ, Troy Wilson 70 n. 3
out-castes 109, 145 n. 45

Padmapāda 24, 113 n. 12
Pande, G. C. 115 n. 15, 147
Panikkar, Raimundo 123 n. 2
pantheism 153
parā-bhakti 146
paramārtha 57, 63, 67, 67 n. 37
paramaguru 22, 28

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paramapuruṣārtha 152
paramārtha-lakṣaṇa 11
paramārthika 45–46
paramātman 4
pariṇāma 102, 106–107
Park, Sung Bae 146 n. 51
Pārtha 75 n. 21
Parthasarathi, G. 16 n. 33
Patañjali 74, 140, 143
path to enlightenment 61, 75 n. 20, 78, 81
Paul, St. 160 n. 21, 161
Perrett, R. W. 15 n. 28, 51 n. 2
personal God 13 n. 23, 14
personal interaction of divine and soul 79, 82–83
personhood of the Absolute 13 n. 22, 14
personhood of the gods 43
Plato 2, 152
Plotinus 2
post-Śaṃkara Advaita 9–10, 73, 90, 95, 97
Potter, Karl H. 70 n. 3
Prabhākara 27
pradāna 37
Prajāpati 36 n. 5, 140 n. 32, 147
Prakāśātman 97, 106
prakṛti 60 n. 25, 102, 104
pramāṇa 136 n. 16, 152
prāṇa 32, 35–36, 36 n. 6, 37, 37 n. 7, 38, 44, 46
prapatti 77
prasāda 70, 70 n. 2, 74 n. 19, 75 n. 20, 81
prasīdati 82
prasthānatraya 136
prātibhāsika sattva 105
pratibimba 99
pratyagātman 57, 60–61, 63, 66
pravāha-rupa 135, 142
prayer 3, 80, 128–129, 149, 160 n. 21, 161 n. 23, 163
prayojana 134
Pseudo-Dionysius 2, 54 n. 8
pūja 122
puruṣa 4, 60 n. 25
puruṣa-tantra 139
pūrvapakṣa 35
pūrvapakṣin 35–36, 36 n. 5, 40, 44, 52
Pushparajan, A. 13 n. 23, 122 n. 1

Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli 4, 19, 112, 112 n. 8, 113, 114 n. 13, 115, 120, 120 nn. 21, 23
rajas 138
Rāmakrishna, Śrī 134, 142 n. 37
Rāmakrishna Mission 133–134
Rāmakrishna Order 163
Rāmānuja 2, 4–5, 18, 62, 124, 135
Rao, K. L. Seshagiri 135 n. 14
realism, Hindu 13, 30, 107
rebirth 74, 159
reflection theory 99
Reiss, Al 128 n. 8
relativism 51 n. 2, 158
resurrection 48
ritual 32, 34, 39–40, 40 n. 11, 41–43, 46, 50, 77, 87, 116, 122
ṛk 53 n. 7
Rogers, Murray 7
Roy, S. S. 142 n. 37
ṛṣis 38, 130

sadbuddhi 58
sādhaka 78–79, 82
sākṣād 58 n. 18, 68 n. 38, 89
sākṣin 11
śakti 93, 102, 104, *āvaraṇa-* 103, *vikṣepa-* 103
śama 135
samādana 135
samādhi, nir-vikalpa 143
sāman 52, 53 n. 7
samāna 36
Samartha, S. J. 130 n. 9
sambandha 134
Śaṃkara, authentic canon 136, as a Brahmin 28, 109–110, "a Buddhist in disguise," 18, 28, on caste 109–110, 114 nn. 13–14, 117, 121, and Christian mystics 108, and Christian vision of life 159, as commentator of Upaniṣads 28, 31, 34–35, 37, 55–57, 72, 90, 104, 113, 120, 134, 137–139, 151, critics of 22, doctrinal correlation with Aquinas 10–12, 16, 151, 151 n. 5, 159 n. 18, encounter with untouchable 113, 113 n. 12, 114 nn. 13–14, 117, and experience 94, 108, 115–117, 152, as humanist 111, as *jīvan-mukta* 135, 145, and love 12, 68, 81, 159, ontology of 9, 10 n. 15, 21, 25, 28, 71, 88, 91–96, 99–100, 104–108, 151–154, as moderate realist 13, 152,

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originality of 22–23, 31 n. 2, as philosopher 4, 19, 31, 109, 138, 146, as philosophical theologian 56 n. 12, doctrine of relation 4, 71, 151–154, in relation to earlier Vedānta 136, in relation to later Advaita 9–10, 12–13, 47 n. 18, 72–73, 84, 86–87, 90, 92, 95–97, 99–101, 103–108, as restorer of Vedānta 28–29, soteriology 70, 70 n. 1, 70 n. 3, 73–83, as theologian 5, 31, 55 n. 9, 80, 83, 89, 108, 138, uniqueness of 11, use of language 16, 51–69, and Vaiṣṇavism 82–83, 105, as world negative pessimist 150, 155
Saṃkarṣa 37
Sāṃkhya 5, 18, 18 n. 4, 27, 35, 40, 99, 138, 140, 142
sampradāya 68, 129, 136
saṃsāra 134–135
samskāra 123
saṃvarga 37, 37 n. 7
Sanatkumāra 147
Sandhya-worship 123 n. 2
sannyāsin 116
Śāntarakṣita 25, 25 n. 25, 26
Śārada 133
Saraswati, Śrī Chandrasekharendra 135
Sarasvati, Dayānanda 27
Sarasvati, Swami Satchidanandendra 85 n. 2, 142 n. 37
Sartre 3
Sarvajñātman 23 n. 20, 24
Sarvāstivāda 19–20, 26
Sarvāstitvavāda 20–21
Sarvaśūnyatvavādin 20–21
Sarvavaināśikarāddhānta 20–21
śāstradṛṣṭyā 44 n. 16
Śāstrī, Cārudeva 106 n. 75
Sastri, Kokileswar 70 n. 3
Śāstrī, N. Anantakṛṣṇa 101 n. 69
Sastri, S. R. Krishnamurthi 86 n. 5, 97 n. 58
Sastri, S. Srirama 86 n. 5, 97 n. 58
Sastry, Alladi Mahadevi 109 n. 1
sat 55 n. 9, 57, 57 n. 14, 144
sat-cit-ānanda 131, 162
satī 111
satisfaction theology 150
sat-kārya-vāda 104
satsang 6, 155, 157 n. 14
sattva 138
satya 56 n. 9, 96
Sautrāntika 19–20
Schmithausen, L. 73 n. 12, 102 n. 70
scholasticism, Christian 2, 5, 10–12, 16, 54 n. 8, 160, Hindu 2, 4–5, 92, 109 n. 2, 126, 151 n. 6, 162
sense organs 36, 38, 48
Sermon on the Mount 132
Sharma, Arvind 109, 146
Shantivanam Ashram 8
Shastri, S. Kappuswami 85 n. 1
siddhāntin 35–36, 36 n. 5, 40, 44
siddhis 74
sins, removal of 75 n. 20, 79, 145
Śiva 114–116
Sivananda, Swami 6, 6 n. 6
Sivananda Ashram 155
Smith, Brian K. 118 n. 20, 121 n. 25
smṛti 36, 121
śravaṇa 75 n. 20, 77 n. 23, 145
Sringeri 133, 135
Sri Ramana Ashram 149, 155
Śrīnivāsācār, Pundit Lakṣmīpuram 90
śruti 5, 36, 78, 83, 121, 138, 152, 154, grace of 72, 72 n. 10, like a mother 68, 68 n. 39, and reason 5, 10, 31, 44, 60 n. 20, 61 n. 23, 78, 86–87, 90–91, 100, 108, 152, as revelation 84, 86, 95, 158
śrutivādin 5
śūdra 112, 115–116
Sundara Pāṇḍya 88, 145
śūnya 19
śūnyatā 24
Śūnyavāda 19
supernatural powers 73–74
Sureśvara 23 n. 20, 84, 86, 88–89, 89 n. 24, 90, 92, 92 n. 40, 94, 95, 98–101, 103, 105–106, 108
Swāmigal, Śrī Chattampi 125–126
svārtha 61–62, 67, 67 n. 37
Śvetaketu 55, 55 n. 9, 56–61, 64, 147

Taber, John 73 n. 12
tādātmya 151, 154
Takasaki, J. 26 n. 26
tamas 138
tapas 149, 149 n. 2
tat 55–57, 57 n. 14, 58, 58 nn. 17–18, 59, 59 n. 20, 60 n. 23, 61 n. 26, 62–63, 64 nn. 30–31, 65 n. 32, 68 n. 38

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tathāgata 26
tathāgatagarbha 26, 26 n. 26
tattva 137, 147
tattvābheda 37
tattva-darśin 137
tat tvam asi 51, 55, 55 n. 9, 61, 66 n. 36, 67, 78
teacher, grace of 72, 72 n. 9, guidance of 1–2, 4, 55, 61, 78, 85, 108, 129–130, 132–133, 135–136, 151
Teresa of Avila, St. 125
theology, Roman Catholic 2–4, 10, 48–50, 148, 157–161, Vedāntic 2, 30–33, 47, 49, 124
Theosophical Society 124
Thibaut, Georges 52, 70 n. 3, 74 n. 18–19, 79 n. 28, 81 n. 38, 83 n. 44
Thomism, Neo- 9 n. 14, transcendental 2
time 25–26, 44 n. 15, 50 n. 23, 60 n. 25, 87, 91, 122, 135, 137, 139, 143–144, 149, 149 n. 3
tīrthakarātmavāda 26
titikṣa 135
trimurti 131
Trinity 131, 162
tri-puti 146
Trout, Jack 128 n. 8
tulyanīḍārtha 58
turya (turiya) 142–144
turyatita 143
tvam 56–60, 60 n. 23, 61–64, 64 n. 30, 65–67
Tvastṛ 44

udāna 36
Udanka 145, 145 n. 45
Uddālaka, Āruṇi 55, 55 n. 9, 147
Udgītha 52–53
Ui, H. 20 n. 12
upādāna 93
upādāna-kāraṇa 103
upādhi 16, 116, 142, 153–154
upanayana 123
upa-rati 135
upāsanā 32

Vācaspatimiśra 20, 36 n. 5, 38, 39, 42–43, 44 n. 16, 87, 97
Vadekar, R. D. 35 n. 4, 50
Vaibhāṣika 19
Vaikunta 135
vairāgya 4
Vaiśeṣika 20, 21
Vaiṣṇavism 82–83
vaiśyas 109, 112, 115, 121 n. 25
Vallabha 2, 18
van Buitenen, J. A. B. 62–63, 63 n. 29, 64 n. 30, 65 n. 33
Vararuci 90
varṇa 109, 112, 113 n. 10, 115–121
varṇa-saṅkara 119
Varuna 34 n. 3
vastu-tantra 139
Vasubandhu 19
Vāsudeva 137
Vatican II 149–150, 161 n. 23
vāyu 35–36, 36 n. 6, 37, 37 n. 7
Vedānta, buddhisticization of 26–28, pre-Śaṃkara 27–28, twofold purpose of 51
Vedapadasala 133
Vempeney, Ishanand 131–132, 132 n. 13
Vetter, T. 22 n. 18
via affirmationis 11
via eminentiae 11
via negationis 11, 159 n. 18
Vidura 110 n. 5
vigraha 41
vijñāna 26, 98
Vijñānabhikṣu 18, 18 nn. 4–5, 19, 23
Vijñānavāda 18–19, 23–25
Vijñānāstitvavādin 20–21
vijñānātman 52
Vikrant, Fr. 131
Vimuktātman 86, 88 n. 17, 96, 101, 106
virāga, iha-amurta-phala-bhoga 135
viśeṣaṇa 16, 52
vishaya 134, 137
Viṣṇu 26, 52–54, 58, 82–83, 105, 122, 135, 145 n. 45
Visvanath, Swami 148
vivarta 101, 105–108
viveka, nitya-anitya-vastu 135
Vivekananda, Swami 141 n. 35
Viyagappa, Ignatius 158 n. 17
von Glasenapp, H. 27 n. 29
vyāna 36
vyavahārika 32, 45–46, 70 n. 3, 105, 153–155

waking state 98, 114 n. 14, 141–143
Warrier, A. G. Krishna 136 n. 15
Witness (Seer) 60, 64, 68, 74 n. 18, 90, 114 n. 14, 141–142

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Wood, Thomas E. 151 n. 6
world, as creation 13, 15–16, 49, 85, 104–105, 121, 160, as creation of *brahman* 12, 15–17, 63, 151, as creation out of nothing 127, as creation of Prajāpati 36 n. 5, as creation of Viṣṇu 105, and *devatās* 35, 43, 45–47, geography of 46, as illusory 13, 20–21, 23, 70 n. 3, 71, 92, 94, 107, 120, 155, indeterminability of 93–97, 104–107, intelligibility of 33–34, 43, 45–49, ontology of 9, 10 n. 15, 15–17, 71, 93–97, 104–107, 133, operation of 35–36, 45–46, 48–49, 73, 138, in relation to *ātman* 34 n. 3, 57–58, 91, 106, in relation to *avidyā* 92–93, 102–104, 106–107, in relation to *brahman* 11–13, 15–17, 48, 63, 71, 106–107, 136–137, 151–154, 156, in relation to *īśvara* 15, 46–47, 73, 82, 153, relative non-being of 160
World Conference of Religions 126

Xenophanes 34 n. 3

yajña 46, 123, 139
Yājñavalkya 110 n. 5, 147
Yama 147
Yamaguchi, S. 20 n. 12
Yāmuna 18
Yoga 74, 74 n. 17, 81 n. 35, 102, 126, 129, 140, 140 n. 30, 143, 145, 145 n. 48
Yogācāra 19
yoga-śāstra 102, 140
yogic powers 42, 73–74
Yogīndrānanda 101 n. 69

Zaehner, R. C. 131 n. 11, 138

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